

Crown Prince condoles Greece

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, on Friday sent a cable to Greek President Constantinos Stephanopoulos condoling him over the death of former Greek President Constantinos Karamanlis. Karamanlis died in the early hours of Thursday of heart failure in an Athens hospital at the age of 91.

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Mubarak holds talks with Assad

DAMASCUS (AFP) — Syrian President Hafez Al Assad received Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in the north-western port city of Latakia Friday. Syrian officials said. Mr. Mubarak's surprise visit to Syria was arranged to discuss recent developments in the Middle East, Egyptian television reported. The two heads of state held a brief private meeting before being joined by their delegations. Mr. Assad's spokesman Gebran Kourieh said. The Egyptian delegation included Prime Minister Kamal Al Ganzuri, Foreign Minister Amr Musa and Mr. Mubarak's political adviser Osama Al Baz. The Syrian delegation included Vice-President Abdul Halim Khaddam, Prime Minister Mahmud Al Zoubi and Foreign Minister Farouk Al Sharaz.

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King receives with German Media Award King, Kohl discuss European role in peace process, sanctions toll on Iraq

By Fairouz Abu-Ghazaleh
Special to the Jordan Times

BADEN-BADEN — His Majesty King Hussein on Friday met with German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and discussed with him the European role in the stalled Mideast peace process, the suffering of the sanctions-stricken Iraqi people and bilateral relations between the two countries.

The King stressed Jordan's commitment to achieving a just and comprehensive peace in the region and helping the "Palestinian brothers in securing their legitimate rights and establishing their own state on their national soil."

King Hussein emphasised Jordan's principled stand towards a just, comprehensive and durable peace in the region.

The King also called for a review of the sanctions imposed on the Iraqi people.

"It is time for seriously taking into consideration the sanctions being imposed on the Iraqi people for the past ten years," said the King.

Also during yesterday's meeting with Chancellor Kohl, the King expressed gratitude for Germany's continual assistance to the Kingdom's various sectors.

Chancellor Kohl voiced his appreciation to King Hussein's continued efforts for a better understanding among nations on the basis

of justice, equality, and international legitimacy, stressing that Germany will continue its support for Jordan to enable it achieve its objectives and aspirations.

He also underlined his country's commitment towards full implementation of all provisions of the Jordanian-European partnership agreement.

The meeting was attended by Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali and Royal Court Chief Fayeze Tarawneh, as well as senior officials on both sides.

Jordan represents one of the highest per capita recipients of German aid, which totalled around two billion marks since 1962.

German aid to Jordan for the 1998 fiscal year is 64 million marks. In addition, Germany contributes 30 per cent of the European Union's budget, which has a separate aid programme for Jordan and other countries.

In a separate meeting, attended by Her Majesty Queen Noor and HRH Princess Haya, German President Roman Herzog expressed support for Jordanian efforts aimed at establishing a lasting peace in the Middle East.

President Herzog lauded the role of King Hussein in developing Jordan in spite of the scarcity of its resources and capabilities.

King Hussein also received at his residence in Bonn German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel and discussed with him means of

bolstering bilateral ties in all fields.

He also discussed with Mr. Kinkel the peace process in the Middle East and means of pushing it forward.

Later on in the evening, His Majesty received the 1997 German Media Award for his dedication and commitment to peace.



His Majesty King Hussein and German President Roman Herzog walk along the honour guard in Bonn, Friday. King Hussein received the German Media Award for his dedication to achieving peace in Baden Baden last night (Reuters photo)

The ceremony was attended by President Herzog. More than 400 leaders, politicians and international media representatives attended the high-profile event, including Palestinian President Yasser Arafat.

The King is accompanied by Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, Chief of the Royal Court Fayeze

Tarawneh and Deputy Prime Minister Jawad Anani.

The King and the Queen are scheduled to pay a state visit to Denmark from April 27-29 and then Tunis afterwards.

Upon the King's departure Thursday for Germany, HRH Crown Prince Hassan was sworn in as Regent.

Israel hints at flexibility ahead of Ross mission

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel hinted Friday at some new flexibility ahead of another peace mission by U.S. mediators, but there were few signs it would be enough to break the deadlock in negotiations with the Palestinians.

U.S. special envoy Dennis Ross and Assistant Secretary of State Martin Indyk are due in Israel Saturday for a week of talks to promote a U.S. peace package focusing on long overdue Israeli troop withdrawals from the West Bank.

Their shuttle mission between Israeli and Palestinian leaders is designed to pave the way for separate talks in London on May 4 between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

According to a series of leaks to the press, Mr. Netanyahu is preparing to increase the scope of his troop withdrawal offer from nine per cent of the West Bank to 11 per cent.

The additional area would link up some of the West Bank enclaves now under Palestinian control and isolate a number of Jewish settlements, the reports said.

West Bank settler leader Pinchas Wallerstein told AFP he had been shown army maps of the larger withdrawal, which he said would be added to a two per cent pullback offered by Israel a year ago but rejected by the Palestinians at that time as insufficient.

The total new redeployment would thus cover 13 per cent of the West Bank, he said, adding that settlers would hold a series of protest demonstrations beginning Sunday.

Senior officials speaking on condition of anonymity acknowledged that Mr. Netanyahu and his top ministers studied such maps on Wednesday, but they said no decisions were taken and more talks are scheduled for early next week.

The officials insisted however that Mr. Netanyahu would continue to reject U.S. demands for a 13 per cent pullback even if Washington put this forward as a "take it or leave it" offer.

There were also no signs Mr. Netanyahu was willing to back down on his insistence that the next troop withdrawal be the last and that Palestinians agree to fold a further pullout scheduled for later this year into negotiations on a final peace settlement.

Palestinian leaders have categorically rejected this.

Israel has also attached conditions to any further land handover which the Palestinians have judged unacceptable — notably a demand that Mr. Arafat hand over Palestinians wanted for attacks on Israelis.

U.S. officials for their part warned that the negotiations were reaching the "end game" after more than a year of deadlock.

"We are going to continue working on this process so long as we think the leaders will make the hard decisions."

If we conclude in London that they're not then that may be the end of it," U.S. State Department spokesman James Rubin said earlier this week.

Mr. Ross has been trying for months to promote a four-part U.S. plan centred around the 13 per cent troop withdrawal, greater Palestinian action against Islamists and a slow-down in Jewish settlement building, all leading to the launch of negotiations on a final Israeli-Palestinian peace deal.

Mr. Arafat this week welcomed the U.S. compromise proposal even though it falls far short of giving Palestinians the 30 per cent of the West Bank they believe Israel is required to yield now under interim peace accords.

Palestinian officials warned this week that if Israel does not implement the promised troop withdrawals and other steps required under interim peace agreements by May 1999 — the deadline set out in the Oslo accords — they would unilaterally proclaim the creation of a Palestinian state.

Mr. Netanyahu warned in a television interview Thursday night that such a proclamation would lead Israel to take "unilateral measures" in areas under its control — an apparent threat to annex occupied territory.

A senior aide to Mr. Arafat, Tayeb Abdul Rahim, countered with a warning of his own.

"If they enter our lands, they will not leave alive," he said.

Amnesty chief on Israel:

Torture is wrong even in name of security, peace

TEL AVIV (AP) — The secretary general of Amnesty International said Thursday that he welcomed the recent release of several Palestinians held by Israel without trial, but that there was still much room for Israel to improve its human rights record.

Pierre Sane, in Israel for a three-day Amnesty coordination meeting, said that it was time Israeli put an end to sanctioned torture against Palestinian prisoners.

"Shaking prisoners — that is torture. Forcing them to sit on kindergarten chairs — that is torture. And torture is wrong, whatever the circumstances, even in the name of security or in the name of peace," said Mr. Sane.

The Israeli supreme court has upheld the right of Israel's security forces to use "moderate physical pressure," when interrogating suspected members of anti-Israeli groups.

In the past, Amnesty has also voiced concern both Israel's use of "administrative detention," which allows prisoners to be held indefinitely without trial.

Israel has denied it systematically abuses prisoners to extract information and claims that administrative detention, a practice left over

the times of British mandate, is a necessary means of fighting terror.

In recent months, Israel released 10 of the 12 longest-held administrative detainees. Israeli and Palestinian peace activists suggested that the releases were due to public campaigns against the policy.

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Security Council members to informally meet Iraqis

Iraq accuses UNSCOM of prolonging sanctions, enforcing American agenda

Combined agency
dispatches

THE U.N. Security Council on Friday agreed to hold an informal meeting with two Iraqi ministers that could produce a first U.S.-Iraq encounter, Western diplomats said.

The 15 Council members agreed that Russia would host the meeting on Monday with Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Said Al Sahhaf and Oil Minister Mohammad Amer Al Rashid, Western diplomats said.

A U.S. diplomat said it was not yet known whether U.S. Ambassador Bill Richardson would attend the informal session. Iraq complains that Washington has rebuffed Iraqi appeals for direct contacts between U.S. and Iraqi officials.

Monday's meeting is due to follow the council's six-monthly review of U.N. sanctions against Iraq in force since the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

Iraq on Thursday accused the U.N. Security Council of attempting to prolong sanctions by adopting an "unjust approach" in reporting on Iraqi disarmament.

In a detailed rebuttal of UNSCOM chief Richard Butler's April 17 report, Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz reiterated that Iraq no longer held any weapons of mass destruction, and called on the U.N. Security Council to lift seven-year-old sanctions immediately.

Mr. Aziz also urged UNSCOM to present to the Security Council all available evidence about outstanding

Iraqi weaponry, so that Iraq may "clarify its position on it and to settle the issue once and for all."

The Special Commission argues that it is up to Iraq, which has a history of concealing weaponry from the inspectors since 1991, to come clean on its remaining weapons of mass destruction.

Repeating charges that UNSCOM was "an organisation controlled by the United States which utilises it for its political purposes against Iraq," Mr. Aziz said: "This report constitutes a flagrant evidence of this situation."

"This situation is not acceptable," he said in his letter to U.N. Security Council president Hisashi Owada, accusing Mr. Butler of harbouring "tendentious political objectives."

His report "aims at achieving the American objectives of keeping the unjust embargo on Iraq indefinitely and keep the oil region in the Gulf occupied or semi-occupied."

In Washington, White House spokesman Mike McCurry said the Clinton administration has "seen insufficient grounds" to lift the sanctions and said Iraq must comply "with a whole host" of requirements before the embargo is removed.

But Mr. Richardson predicted Iraq and its supporters would mount an effort to lift the sanctions when the Security Council holds its six-monthly review of Iraqi sanctions Monday.

"We will oppose it on the grounds that they're not fully complying with Security Council resolutions," Mr. Richardson told a House committee. "And secondly, there will be

Showdown looms over closing file on Iraq's nuclear programme

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Russia is urging the Security Council to halt inspections of suspected Iraqi clandestine nuclear facilities, after U.N. inspectors reported no evidence Baghdad is developing nuclear weapons, diplomats said Friday.

The diplomats, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the Russians circulated a draft resolution informally to council members late Thursday. The council will review the status the seven-year-old sanctions on Baghdad on Monday.

If approved, such a move would not mean efforts to weaken the disarmament provisions of the Security Council resolution, and we will also oppose those, too."

The Monday review will be the first since U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan signed an agreement with the Iraqis in February to allow inspectors to visit Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's eight presidential compounds.

Such reviews are conducted behind closed doors.

Mr. Aziz said that if the Security Council, which meets to review the sanctions on Monday, fails to lift the embargo, "the states which prevent that bear full responsibility for their unjust position and its subsequent consequences."

Mr. Aziz's letter came after the Iraqi cabinet, at a meeting chaired by Mr. Hussein, issued similar criticism of Mr. Butler's six-monthly report to the council.

The Iraqi cabinet also warned that a decision to prolong sanctions would lead to "a new situation... and the international community must assume its responsibility."

Mr. Aziz said that Mr. Butler's report "represents a flagrant model of lacking objectivity and fairness, denying and distorting the facts."

The UNSCOM chief, an Australian national, said in his report that there had been "virtually no progress" in dismantling Iraq in the past six months.

Mr. Aziz challenged Mr. Butler's statements about the Iraqi disarmament process, under which Iraq must provide complete information to the inspectors whose task is to verify.

"This approach is unjust. Iraq has provided what is in its possession. It was and is still ready to clarify any suspicions of the Special Commission," said Mr. Aziz.

Referring to biological weapons, Mr. Aziz questioned the results of a technical evaluation meeting last month in Vienna attended by international experts, and whose negative

conclusions were signed by all present.

"Iraq is confident that it has met all the requirements relevant to disarmament in this file," he said. "All the biological weapons and components of these weapons have been destroyed."

"Iraq has submitted an actual and truthful presentation of the history of the biological file, and the Special Commission did not present any tangible evidence to support its criticism, which is of a political and propaganda nature," he said.

Mr. Aziz also stressed that Iraq had fulfilled all disarmament requirements in the chemical area, an assertion which is also doubted by UNSCOM.

He criticised Mr. Butler for failing to provide evidence showing that Iraq is still concealing elements of its biological, chemical and ballistic missiles programmes, saying that such a refusal was "unacceptable."

But it would mean that "investigations of the clandestine nuclear programme are basically over," one diplomat said.

The U.N.-affiliated International Atomic Energy Agency, which performs nuclear inspections in Iraq, would instead shift to "passive monitoring" of known Iraqi research facilities. This month, the IAEA reported that it had found no evidence Iraq is still maintaining a clandestine nuclear programme.

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Government appoints Arab firm to manage sale of its equity in JCFC

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The government on Thursday signed an agreement with an Egyptian firm to manage the sale of 33 per cent of government equity in the Jordan Cement Factories Company (JCFC).

Minister of Finance Suleiman Hafez said that the agreement with Egypt Finance Group-Hermes (EFG) enables the Cairo-based firm to work as a financial advisor on the process of selling most of the government's shares in the JCFC, which amounts to 49.5 per cent of the company's capital.

Mr. Hafez told the Jordan Times that he expects that the sale of 33 per cent of equity to be accomplished between eight months to one year.

"The process might include the sale of the equity to a strategic partner, the issuance of Global Depository Receipt

(GDR) or public offering in the international market. All options are open," Mr. Hafez said.

The minister stressed that the Egyptian firm will prepare a report on JCFC's standing to help foreign firms who are interested get acquainted with the company.

"It will prepare a comprehensive report on the JCFC which will include the achievements of the company, its future plans, its profits and other necessary information with utmost transparency and clarity," Mr. Hafez said.

The government's step is part of a privatisation process it launched in 1996 in line with the Kingdom's economic restructuring programme.

The process stipulates the sale of government equities in public firms such as the Jordan Telecommunication Company (JTC), Royal Jordanian and the JCFC.

The JCFC's 1997 financial

report revealed that the company has recorded a net profit of JD11.9 million, a JD633,770 increase in profits over 1996.

Mr. Hafez said that the sale of the government's equity in the JCFC will enable the profit-making firm to attract foreign investors.

He added that the government will choose "the best offer that meets its requirements and the party that will pay the highest price," regardless of whether such party is local or foreign.

However, the government's plan to sell its equity in JCFC drew disapproval from senior officials in the company who urged it to refrain from selling to foreign investors.

They also sent memoranda to Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali and the Minister of Trade and Industry Hani Mulki urging them to halt the privatisation of the firm.

Home News

Princess Aisha attending meeting on women in U.S. armed forces

WASHINGTON (Petra) — HRH Princess Aisha is currently taking part in an annual meeting by a consultative committee for women serving in the U.S. armed forces which opened Wednesday.

Princess Aisha, director of women personnel affairs in the Jordan Armed Forces, is accompanied by HRH Princess Basma Bint Ali and a delegation from her department.

Their Majesties King Hussein and Queen Noor had received a delegation from the U.S. armed forces committee during their visit to Jordan in July 1996 at the invitation of Princess Aisha, who briefed them on women recruits in the Jordan Armed Forces.

The four-day meeting in Washington is also being attended by delegates from Israel, Canada, the U.K., Germany, Norway, Sweden and Colombia.

The U.S. armed forces committee, which was created in 1951, advises the U.S. defence secretary on questions pertaining to women serving in the armed forces and presents proposals about updating laws and regulations concerning them.



Minister of Planning Rima Khalaf and Greek Ambassador Aristidis Sandis sign the grant agreement (Petra photo)

Greece grants \$500,000 for Kingdom's social security plan

AMMAN (J.T.) — Greece has granted Jordan \$500,000 to help it carry out a government-sponsored social security package plan designed to address poverty, unemployment and other chronic ills mainly affecting the less-developed regions of the country.

An agreement on the grant was signed by Minister of Planning Rima Khalaf and Greek Ambassador Aristidis Sandis at the attendance of senior Min-

istry of Planning officials and Greek embassy staff.

Following the signing ceremony, Mr. Sandis described Jordan relations with Greece as excellent in all fields, noting that the grant marks the first formal assistance from Greece to Jordan for development projects.

The government last year announced that it planned to carry out a multi-year plan to improve the infrastructure and living conditions in the

country's less-developed regions, including the Palestinian refugee camps.

The government said that of the JD431 million needed for the plan, financial assistance and loans have already been secured from a number of European and friendly nations as well as international organisations.

The plan entails modernising the infrastructure of basic services, creating jobs and improving health and social services.

Scandinavian film week opens today with presentations targeting children

By Omar Karmi
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — For those parents who are sick of American children's films that are mini-versions of Stallone/Schwarzenegger flicks, the Scandinavian Film Week, which starts today at the Royal Cultural Centre, may be the perfect alternative.

Scandinavian films in general have had mixed fortunes, often either associated with the doom of Bergman or, with the Scandinavian reputation for being extremely liberal, a chance to see a bit of "naturalism" at work.

The films featured this week, however, should confound those expectations and prove to doubters that it is possible to make children's films that are both serious and educational, yet entertaining and — most importantly — enjoyable for children.

The week starts tonight at

7:00 with a screening of the famous Swedish author Astrid Lindgreen's classic fantasy tale, "The Brothers Lionheart." Set in a far off fantasy world, not unlike that of Narnia, it features two brothers, both of whom die within a short while of each other in this world, only to be reunited in the next to fight an epic battle against the forces of evil. A real adventure story, it is one of the most popular children's novels in Scandinavia, surpassing even those of the better known Roald Dahl. The movie will be repeated on Thursday at 7:00.

But perhaps the highlight of the week will be the Danish film "Pelle The Conqueror," which won an Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film in 1988 as well as the Gold Palm Best Film Award at the Cannes Festival the same year. Adapted from the classic novel by Martin Andersen Nexø, it tells the story of an

aging Swedish father (played by Max von Sydow) who comes to Denmark in search of a better life with his son, Pelle. There, they are confronted with numerous prejudices and obstacles, before Pelle outgrows his father's stature and character, learns to stand up for himself, and sets out to conquer the country. "Pelle The Conqueror" will be screened on Sunday at 7:00 and Tuesday at 4:30.

Other films to be shown are: "Children of Nature" (Sunday 4:30), "Herman" (Monday 4:30), "Sixteen" (Monday 7:00), "Dog Thieves" (Tuesday 7:00 p.m.; Thursday 11:00 a.m.), "Whitebear King Valemor" (Wednesday 4:30; Friday 7:00), "Benjamin Dove" (Wednesday 7:00; Thursday 4:30), "Carl and the Angels" (Friday 11:00 a.m.) and "Nature's Warriors" (Friday 4:30). All films are subtitled in English.

Stone-throwing dispute disrupts traffic

AMMAN (J.T.) — Stone-throwing by two groups of University of Jordan (UJ) students hindered traffic last week on University Road and led to the arrest of a number of students, according to a statement from the Public Security Department (PSD).

The statement added that there were no injuries, but a number of parked vehicles were damaged.

The two groups, each with

dozens of participants, started throwing stones at each other across the area surrounding the main gate of UJ, according to eyewitnesses accounts.

Hundreds of students who gathered on both sides of the stone cluttered road were dispersed by the PSD and the Traffic Department.

Traffic was also redirected on University Road through a nearby neighbourhood, and patrol cars roamed the

neighbourhood in search for the rest of the youth involved in the rumble.

The hostility between the two groups has been going on for one year, after two students were suspended last year for fighting, said Salem Bdour, UJ Dean of Student Affairs.

Mr. Bdour condemned Wednesday's flare-up and said deterrent measures would be taken against perpetrators.

King's initiative to enhance Internet services welcomed by industry officials

By Ahmed Naser
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — An initiative by His Majesty King Hussein to provide a satellite channel to enhance Internet services in the Kingdom has been welcomed by the country's Internet Service Providers (ISPs).

The recent provision of a reduced-cost satellite channel, Hashem (1), which is overseen by His Majesty's Royal Communications and has so far been utilised by three ISPs, will make the Internet available to a larger circle of Jordanians, especially students, according to an open letter from three ISPs.

The letter from Global One, National Equipment and Technical Services (NETS) and Index read: "International [data-communication] circuits through Hashem (1)... have made it easier for us to provide better and faster services at reduced prices to citizens."

Published Thursday in the Arabic daily Al Ra'i, the letter called the provision of Hashem (1) "proof that His Majesty has a sincere desire to provide the latest technology to the sons of this nation and a

desire that Jordan be a pioneer in education, science, culture, medicine and technology."

Until now only those who have high income have been able to afford the Internet in Jordan. Ma'en Suheimat, general manager of the First Telecommunication Group (FTG) which owns the ISP FirstNet, told the Jordan Times.

FirstNet, which recently started offering its services in Irbid, Zarqa and Agaba, will also get its data-communications channel through Hashem (1) in the coming few days, said Mr. Suheimat.

The channel has already begun speeding up slow Internet connections, a source of numerous complaints from the country's Web users.

"With Hashem (1), Jordanians can now browse the Internet at Western standards," Marwan Juma, NETS general manager, told the Jordan Times.

Practical steps will be formulated to follow up on the initiative of the King to make the World Wide Web available to more, principally at the educational level, added Mr. Juma.

Among the steps that will be

taken by ISPs to implement King Hussein's vision are coordination with the Ministry of Education to assess the situation of schools in the Kingdom regarding the availability of PCs, phone-lines and sufficient Internet bandwidth.

"Our [ISPs] next meeting will be with the Minister of Education in order to study the best way to deliver the Internet to every school student out there," said Imad Ayoub, Global One's general manager.

"Objectives and deadlines should be assigned in order to implement this vision," said Mr. Juma. "Responsibility and accountability should also be integral to any planning to ensure that the implementation is followed through."

Among the proposals made by ISPs toward the fulfilment of the King's initiative were Global One's offer of free installation services and FirstNet's declaration of its readiness "to extend funds to any project that will further the country's educational process."

Mr. Suheimat said FirstNet, which currently gives discount to students, will extend

even more benefits to the academic sector, including the establishment of specialised Internet centres for researchers and students across the Kingdom.

In a separate letter of gratitude, the director of the National Information Centre (NIC), Yousef Nusair, wrote: "This Hashemite initiative... supports His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan's determined efforts, since His Highness' establishment of NIC, towards the continued enhancement of [NIC] into organising and administering information for easy access by decision-makers, researchers and students."

Yet even with the provision of Hashem (1), other related costs such as phone bills still stand in the face of making the Internet universal, as a local call which costs JD0.56 an hour is "still too expensive," said Mr. Suheimat.

Meanwhile, Mr. Juma stressed "now that the process has started, we cannot slow down... otherwise everything will be for nothing."

ISPs only have three months before the new school year starts to make the King's dream come true.

Seminar on King Faisal, modern Arab state opens today

MAFRAQ (Petra) — A seminar on the creation of the modern Arab state and the enterprises of King Faisal in Syria and Iraq between 1918 and 1933 will be held today at Al al Bayt University with the participation of intellectuals and historians from Jordan and other Arab countries.

The two-day meeting will tackle working papers submitted by participants examining King Faisal's endeavours in social, educational, political and economic fields.

The papers will also provide details on King Faisal's work as a representative of the Arab Nation at the 1918-1920 peace conference in Europe, the parliamentary experiments in Syria during the same period, and the king's struggle to thwart the ambitions of Western nations in the Arab region.

On the sidelines of the seminar, the university will hold three exhibitions of rare books published during the reign of King Faisal in Syria and Iraq. Al al Bayt University's publications and artworks by Nazem Hamed from the University staff.

Labour ministry implementing measures to curb illegal employment

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Ministry of Labour on Friday warned that it was taking legal action against employers hiring non-Jordanians without work permits and guest workers staying illegally in the country.

Ministry of Labour Secretary General Saleh Tarawneh was quoted by the Jordan News Agency, Petra, as saying that last year his office issued only 13,200 work permits to guest workers, who number more than 200,000 according to some statistics.

Mr. Tarawneh said it has come to the ministry's attention that many employers and guest workers have been violating labour laws by failing to renew work permits.

This is a clear violation of a 1996 law which stipulates that guest workers must acquire valid work permits to be able to obtain employ-

ment in the Kingdom, said Mr. Tarawneh, adding that the greater number of guest workers are working illegally.

The Ministry of Labour last year reached an agreement with the Egyptian government on regulating the employment of Egyptian workers in Jordan, including obtaining prior approval before entering the Kingdom.

Regulations stipulate that agricultural workers, from Arab countries must pay an annual fee of JD10, while those working in other fields pay JD100. A non-Arab guest worker must pay JD300 annually for a work permit.

Mr. Tarawneh said the ministry regulations were introduced in order to organise the labour market in Jordan. They require that

employers give priority to Jordanian workers, and only in certain occupations for which Jordanian substitutes are not available can non-Jordanians be employed, he added.

Unofficial estimates put the rate of unemployment in Jordan at 20-25 per cent, and according to Mr. Tarawneh, the ministry's regulations are enforced in order to help Jordanians find work and to restrict non-Jordanians in the labour force to a very limited number.

Mr. Tarawneh said he has directed labour inspectors to conduct intensive campaigns to ensure that employers abide by the regulations and warned that the violators of the law will face legal action. He also said non-Jordanians found without valid work permits will be asked to leave the country.

Fund-raising fashion show, exhibition to be held next week

AMMAN (J.T.) — Under the patronage of HRH Princess Sarvath, the Pakistan Women's Association is scheduled to hold an event on April 29 at the Amman Marriott Hotel, to raise funds for the Young Muslim Women's Association (YMWA), according to a press release.

An exclusive fashion show, "Style and Grace," will hit the catwalk with an array of colour, glamour, texture and design. The designer behind this original collection is Rizwan Beyg, whose 1992 show proved to be a great success, the statement said.

The Nur Collection, a

jewelry exhibition, will be shown in the adjoining hall. These exotic pieces are traditionally handcrafted by artisans who have been in this craft for generations. The sponsors, Khalil Al Sayegh, are highly reputed jewelry manufacturers with gem boutiques in Pakistan, Thailand, Hong Kong, the UAE, Belgium and Italy, it added.

Also to be displayed are selection of modern and contemporary jewelry items, as well as a sale of handmade linens, soft furnishings, rugs, carpets, brass, silver and copperware.

The Pakistan Women's

Association is a small organisation working under the patronage of Princess Sarvath that takes part in various charitable activities held in the country such as the YMWA, Al Hussein Society for the Rehabilitation of the Physically Handicapped, the Jordanian Society for the Blind and other needy charities that are brought to their attention.

The proceeds from this particular event will benefit the YMWA's projects such as the centre for special education and the sheltered workshop for the mentally handicapped, the announcement concluded.

Number of private universities growing despite criticism of cost, quality

By Fairouz Abu-Ghazaleh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Scores of private universities mushrooming across the country have turned Jordan into a regional hub for higher education, posing a dilemma for officials and academics keen to strike a balance between maintaining quality and ensuring profit.

In the last five years, the number of universities has jumped to 20, excluding over 50 community colleges, after the country lifted a ban on the private sector setting up universities.

"The country has the highest per capita number of universities in the region... and they are all full," said Munther Masri, head of Jordan's Human Resource Development Centre and former education minister.

Iraq, with 22 million people, has 13 accredited universities, while

Lebanon and Syria, with populations of 3.4 million and 16 million respectively, have nine and four universities.

Dr. Masri told the Jordan Times that the high number of universities in Jordan — seven public and 13 private — was chiefly due to the large percentage of students, whose ages range between 18 and 24.

Jordan's role as a regional and international hub has also played a major role in attracting foreign students, he added. Over 2,500 Malaysian students are attending state-run universities, in addition to hundreds of Gulf and other Arab nationals.

However, many Jordanians complain of the costly tuition fees of private institutions. Others say that many universities are not well prepared to offer them the latest state-of-the-art education techniques to enable them to counter challenges of a modernising world.

"If we look at education costs of state-run institutions and compare them to private ones, we will find a huge disparity," said columnist Rakan Majali in a recent editorial in Al Dustour.

"At the same time, we also notice that the quality of education offered at public universities is better than that offered at private ones. This is contrary to the situation in the rest of the world, where people pay more for a quality of education that cannot be offered by the state."

While the cost of attending a semester at Amman Private University ranges between JD1,000 and JD1,750 (15 credit hours), a student would pay between JD150-JD350 for the same amount of credit hours at the state-run University of Jordan.

Several graduates of private universities often complain of having spent too much money on an education that does not guarantee

them fair employment opportunities.

"We pay thousands of dinars to go to private universities," said a recent graduate of a private university, who requested anonymity. "But after going through the hassle of getting our degrees accredited by the Ministry of Higher Education, we receive second priority when competing with public university graduates in the job market."

However, Dr. Masri disagreed, saying that the public sector does not favour state university graduates over private university ones.

"Private universities are introducing a new product to the market," Dr. Masri explained. "It is only a matter of time until the market builds its confidence in these fresh graduates."

Forty-five committees comprising private and public sector educationalists have sketched details of a preliminary Higher Education

Development Plan (HEDP) as part of efforts to help improve the performance of the lucrative educational sector.

The controversial \$70 million plan, expected to be crystallised by the end of this year, will seek to limit the profit-making of private universities and to upgrade the quality of education.

Ahmad Hourani, founder of Amman Private University, said the HEDP will assign university planning and administration to the Higher Educational Council, a move he claimed would result in "reducing universities, whether public and private, to mere copies of each other, leaving very little room for excellence."

Instead, he said, they should encourage free competition and decentralisation.

"It is a fact that competition is the rule among private universities," he said. "Thus students are, in the final

analysis, free to choose the university they will attend, while universities, if they wish to attract students, must distinguish themselves in one or more ways by concentrating on quality educational programmes."

The Ministry of Higher Education recently said it will only allow non-profit universities to open campuses in Jordan. Out of 30 applications, the ministry granted permission to six institutions.

Most of the existing 13 private universities are profit-making institutions.

"There has been an attempt to play down the significance of private universities simply because of the question of profit," Dr. Hourani said.

He defended private universities, saying they were attracting an increasing number of students, and therefore earning millions of dollars in badly-needed foreign currency.

what's going on

SCANDINAVIAN FILM WEEK

* Swedish film "The Brothers Lionheart" (with subtitles in English) at the Royal Cultural Centre at 7:00 p.m.
* Icelandic film "Children of Nature" (with subtitles in English) at the Royal Cultural Centre on Sunday, April 26 at 4:30 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. respectively.

FILM

* "My name is Bertolt Brecht — Exile in USA" (with subtitles in German) at the University of Jordan at 1:00 p.m.

LECTURE

* "Readings in the Jordanian Drama" (in Arabic) by Iraqi critic Dr. Abdullah Ibrahim at the Royal Cultural Centre at 6:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* Paintings by Naji Al Sarjary at Hammouri Art Gallery, Gardens Street. (Tel. 5536098) until May 3.

* Art exhibition at the Alhiyyah School for Girls, Jabal Amman (Tel. 4624872), until April 25.

* Works by Yassin Al Mohamadawi at the Orient Gallery, Shmeisani (Tel. 5681303/4), until May 7.

* Photographic exhibition entitled "A Tour in the Dead Sea" by Jussen and Savi-giac at the French Cultural Centre, until April 30.

* Paintings by Lebanese-American artist Etel Adnan entitled "Artist's Book of Art and Poetry" at Darar Al Fumm, Jabal Weibdeh, until May 21. Also displaying works by Berlin-based Syrian artist Marwan Bashi entitled

* Paintings on handmade paper at Noor Al Hussein Foundation, off Wadi Sagra St. (Tel. 5699141/2), until April 25.

CORRECTION

In a table printed by the Jordan Times on April 23-24, part of an article entitled "Anguish versus optimism: The Kingdom's privatisation process sparks a nationwide debate," some figures were erroneously reported. Following are the correct figures. The government-owned Ma'in Spa signed a 30-year lease with the French company ACCOR last week, and the Jordan Telecom Corporation, with financial advisor Merrill Lynch, plans to sell 40% of shares to a foreign strategic partner by mid-1998. The Jordan Times regrets any inconveniences caused by these errors.

Hopes rekindled for Taiwan-China ties after ice-breaking talks

TAIPEI (AFP) — Hopes of improved relations between Taiwan and China have been rekindled by talks in Beijing when the long-time rivals moved closer to a meeting between their top negotiators.

Both governments spoke positively after the first bilateral talks which ended in Beijing Friday, ending a three-year freeze in contacts.

"It is an important step forward, a positive interaction which has enabled an exchange of views and promoted mutual understanding," said Shou Ke-Sheng, vice chairman of Taiwan's cabinet-level Mainland Affairs Council (MAC).

China's foreign ministry called for negotiations between the bodies charged with handling ties between the two sides, who have been split since the Communists won a civil war in 1949.

"We maintain that cur-

rently the time is ripe for formal talks across the Straits under the principle of one China," Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhu Bangzao said Thursday.

The main outcome of the latest meeting was an agreement for Koo Chen-Fu, chairman of Taiwan's quasi-official Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) to visit the mainland by the end of this year.

But the two sides are yet to hammer out technicalities for the visit.

SEF's counterpart Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS) had suggested that Mr. Koo travel to the mainland for a seminar to be jointly held by the two bodies, while SEF had preferred a travel visit.

But both bodies brushed aside suggestions that Mr. Koo, who sits in the powerful central standing committee of the ruling Kuomintang (KMT) here,

would be in China for a dialogue.

"We hope the nature of Mr. Koo's trip would be simple," said SEF Deputy Secretary General Jan Jyh-Hong who led the Taiwan team in the discussions before returning home Friday.

Mr. Jan also indicated that political talks were unlikely to start soon.

"You cannot leap to political talks without making step-by-step progress by building on exchanges that have been held in the past," he said.

Mr. Jan's counterpart Li Yafei also clarified that the next meeting between Mr. Koo and ARATS Chairman Wang Daohan must not be considered a dialogue, according to CNA reports.

Mr. Koo's trip, nonetheless, would be highly significant as it would signal an improvement in ties which were damaged after Beijing launched six

rounds of military exercises near Taiwan and launched acrimonious attacks on Taipei leaders in the past three years, observers here said.

Mr. Koo and his counterpart Mr. Wang held a historic talk in Singapore five years ago amid flourishing cross-strait trade and other civilian exchanges.

Both leaders agreed to resolve mutual differences through further lower-level meetings, with the two rivals seeking eventual reunification.

However, Beijing cut off SEF-ARATS contacts in mid 1995 in protest over a trip to the United States by Taiwan President Lee Teng-Hui, accusing him of seeking independence for this island.

China has considered Taiwan a breakaway province since the Communist forces drove nationalist troops here in 1949.



Serbian Radical Party supporters celebrate after hearing the results of the referendum in Belgrade. Serbians voted 97 per cent against Western involvement in Kosovo in results based on a count of just over 20 per cent of municipalities, official media reported Friday (Reuters photo)

Rugova condemns Serbian regime and extremists

PRISTINA, Yugoslavia (AFP) — Kosovo Albanian leader Ibrahim Rugova condemned Friday the "violence of the Serbian regime" as well as "any kind of violence that may be provoked by various different extremists."

His comments came a day after reports of deadly clashes between the Yugoslav army and alleged ethnic Albanian fighters. Sixteen Kosovo Albanians were killed Thursday when trying to infiltrate Kosovo territory from Albania, according to a statement

from the military.

But a Serb source close to the army said that at least 23 Albanians were killed in conflicts Wednesday and Thursday in the western region of the province, near the border with Albania.

Mr. Rugova told reporters that "the incidents on the border between Kosovo and Albania have been continuing," which showed a "danger for the spread of the conflict in the region."

"We call on the international community to take preventive action," Mr. Rugova said.

"We condemn the violence of the Serbian regime and we condemn also any kind of violence that may be provoked by various different extremists," he added.

Mr. Rugova again denied any knowledge of the underground militant Kosovo Liberation army, accused of terrorism by Belgrade.

"I am trying to find out who those people are, what are their goals, whether they exist or if maybe this is another Serbian game," Mr. Rugova said.

Sweden's ruling Social Democrats maintain lead in polls

STOCKHOLM (AFP) — Sweden's ruling Social Democrats have maintained their lead in the polls over the opposition Conservatives.

Five months ahead of legislative elections, according to a poll published Friday.

If the Sept. 20 vote were to be held today, Prime Minister Goran Persson's Social Democrats would win 39.5 per cent of votes, compared to 27 per cent for the Conservatives headed by former Bosnian civilian high representative and Prime Minister Carl Bildt.

The Temo Institute poll was published in the Swedish daily Dagens Nyheter.

In February, the previous Temo poll gave the Social Democrats 37.4 per cent of voter support, against 27.5 per cent for the Conservatives.

The Centre party, which provides crucial support to Social Democrats on key issues in parliament, would garner seven per cent of the vote, up 1.1 per cent from February, while the Left (formerly Communist) party is credited with eight per cent of votes, down one per cent.

The Green party lost 1.5 per cent from February to five per cent.

Though the survey confirms the Persson government's rise in the polls, Mr. Persson himself is lagging behind Mr. Bildt in the popularity race. In a public opinion poll published in early April, 55 per cent of Swedes said they would prefer to see Mr. Bildt as prime minister after the election, compared to only 38 per cent for Mr. Persson.

In the 1994 legislative elections, the Social Democrats won 45.2 per cent of votes and the Conservatives garnered 22.4 per cent.

Friday's Temo poll, conducted April 15-22, questioned 1,032 people and has a margin of error of less than three per cent.

Doctors satisfied with Czech president

INNSBRUCK, Austria (AFP) — Doctors pronounced themselves "very satisfied" Friday with ailing Czech President Vaclav Havel's progress, after he woke from a drug-induced sleep.

Mr. Havel "is awake and can breathe without assistance," doctors said at a press conference, a day after taking the president off an artificial respirator.

Professor Ernst Bodner, who operated on Mr. Havel in an Innsbruck hospital, said Mr. Havel's full recovery was "in sight" and the president could leave the intensive care unit "within a few days."

After an operation for a perforated intestine April 14, Mr. Havel underwent further surgery to remove a small

abscess from his stomach wall and was put into a drug-induced sleep Saturday when he had his bronchial tubes cleaned because of breathing problems.

Mr. Havel was operated on in December 1996 for the removal of a cancerous lung tumour and has been hospitalized several times since. He was rushed to hospital on April 14 while holidaying in the Austrian Tyrol.

Prof. Bodner said catheters, inserted during surgery, would be removed later Friday or Saturday. Most stitches would also be taken out.

Another hospital professor, Norbert Mutz, who is in charge of the intensive care unit, said Mr. Havel's organs were functioning normally.

However, Prof. Mutz added that a decisive moment would come when other machines assisting the president are shut down.

Thursday a hospital spokesperson said the Czech president could again communicate from time to time with his entourage.

Mr. Havel had recovered Thursday morning from a "slight" fever the night before. Austrian doctors added that his condition was "stable" and the scar from the operation for the perforated intestine was no longer inflamed.

His doctors said Wednesday that his antibiotics dosage had been reduced and that his temperature had dropped to 36 degrees Celsius.

Simple funeral for former Greek president

ATHENS (AFP) — Former Greek leader Constantine Caramanlis was to be buried Friday evening in a simple ceremony attended by a small, select group of mourners, according to the late president's wishes.

Caramanlis died in the early hours of Thursday morning of heart failure in an Athens hospital at the age of 91.

The funeral was scheduled to begin at 6:00 p.m. (1500 GMT) in the small church of Aghia Philothei in a residential suburb of Athens.

President Costas Stephanopoulos and Prime Minister Costas Simitis were to head a small government delegation of mourners.

Mr. Stephanopoulos, who was in Budapest when Caramanlis died, paid his last respects to the Greek leader saying: "Caramanlis accomplished duties which were highly appreciated by the Greek people. Whatever his political functions, he always had in mind to serve his people."

His Hungarian counterpart Arpad Goncz said Caramanlis "was one of the principal democratic leaders in Europe, whose life-long work will have consequences for the future of Greece."

Former French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing — a personal friend — was among the few foreign notables expected to attend.

Before he died, Caramanlis requested no flowers or wreaths at his funeral, with any donations directed to charitable organisations.

People wishing to pay their last respects had been instructed to gather along the short route from the church to the Caramanlis foundation, where the former leader was to be buried.

ICRC to move expatriates from Afghan north

ISLAMABAD (R) — The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said Friday it had decided to permanently move its expatriate staff from a strategic northern Afghan city to another area or a neighbouring country.

"The stability is sometimes not very good in the northern region," said Urs Kluser, head of the ICRC sub-delegation based in Mazar-i-Sharif, which is controlled by the anti-Taliban alliance.

"What we are looking at now is that we have coordination somewhere outside Mazar. The possibilities we look at are near neighbouring countries which are more stable, or in (capital) Kabul or in Peshawar (in neighbouring Pakistan)," Mr. Kluser told a news conference.

He said ICRC expatriate staff in northern Afghanistan had been looted, harassed on a number of occasions, and he felt their presence in Mazar would increase the risk to their activities.

The ICRC pulled its 12 permanent expatriate staff members out of Mazar last month after they were caught in heavy fighting between armed factions in the city. They have maintained assistance to the area using local Afghan employees.

Their activities in Mazar include providing medical assistance to local hospitals and visiting prisoners of war.

"What we intend to do is to reduce our vulnerability, our visibility. It means we won't have expatriates permanently based in Mazar. We are working on a system that local staff continue and expatriates go in and out," Mr. Kluser said.

ICRC, with a \$50-million budget for the country, says Afghanistan is its largest operation anywhere in the world with about 100 expatriates and close to 1,000 local employees.

Several other aid groups have stopped their activities in Mazar and surrounding areas until the security situation improves.

Mr. Kluser said ICRC activities in Taliban-controlled areas were facing less risk than in the north, where factional fighting erupts frequently between armed groups.

The Taliban control two thirds of Afghanistan and have vowed to enforce their strict interpretation of Islamic Sharia law across the country. They are opposed by the northern-based opposition alliance.

Representatives of the two sides are scheduled to meet Saturday in Islamabad for the first peace talks in more than a year.

Indonesia escapes U.N. censure for rights abuses in East Timor

GENEVA (AFP) — Indonesia Friday escaped censure for its human rights abuses in East Timor by agreeing to allow a group of U.N. experts to visit the troubled province.

A resolution presented by the European Union to the U.N. Human Rights Commission was withdrawn in favour of a declaration, whose text contains much more comforting words for Jakarta.

The decision came on the last day of the 54th session of the commission in Geneva, which meets for six weeks each year.

The declaration hailed the Indonesian government's decision to invite the U.N. working group on arbitrary detention to the former Portuguese colony before

the next commission session opens in March 1999.

East Timor, annexed by Jakarta in 1976, has been engaged in fight ever since for independence.

The commission also mentioned Jakarta's decision to launch a national plan of action on human rights this year and its intention to ratify the Convention Against Torture.

Also, it welcomed the country's commitment "to allow greater access to East Timor by the international media and humanitarian organisations."

However, Jakarta has still not come forward with a date on the opening of human rights bureau to handle the problem of East Timor, an undertaking Jakarta had promised in

1994. The resolution, which Indonesia managed to avoid, condemned continuing reports of human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, disappearance, torture and arbitrary detention, in the province.

The motion voiced concern at increased violence in East Timor in 1997 and at the continuing policy of migration to the region.

It called on Jakarta to immediately release East Timorese detained or sentenced on political grounds and to clarify further the circumstances surrounding the outbreak of violence in the capital, Dili, in 1991.

Indonesia was rapped at the commission last year when a resolution against it on East Timor was passed.

Secret Service officer worried about Lewinsky's actions

WASHINGTON (AFP) — A Secret Service officer voiced concerns about Monica Lewinsky's movements and behaviour about the White House a few days before she was transferred to the Pentagon. The New York Times said Friday.

Gary Byrne told deputy White House chief of staff Evelyn Lieberman two years ago that he had seen the young intern in the West Wing of the building without authorisation, and that he had seen her there after hours as well, a former unidentified White House official told the daily.

Within days, Ms. Lewinsky was removed from her job as a low-level aide in the White House to a minor position in the Pentagon, said the official.

Ms. Lewinsky is at the centre of an investigation by independent Counsel Kenneth Starr into allegations she had an affair with President Bill Clinton who swore her to lie about it under oath — an impeachable offence.

Ms. Lieberman, who has appeared before Mr. Starr's grand jury, said she transferred Ms. Lewinsky out of the White House in April 1996 because of "immature and inappropriate behaviour."

Ms. Lewinsky, according to other White House aides, dressed provocatively and often left her duties to attend presidential events.

An aide to Ms. Lieberman confirmed that Mr. Byrne voiced concerns about Ms. Lewinsky, but said he was not the only one. In deciding to remove Ms. Lewinsky, Ms. Lieberman acted on similar information and warnings from other sources.

Ms. Lieberman never disclosed her testimony to the grand jury, but denied ever receiving reports that Mr. Clinton and Ms. Lewinsky had been seen in a sexual encounter.

Mr. Starr has subpoenaed Mr. Byrne and other Secret Service agents assigned to the president, but has been challenged in court by the Treasury Department, which argues that anything Secret Service personnel see or hear while guarding the president is privileged.

U.S. invites French Communist minister in historic first

PARIS (AFP) — French Transport Minister Jean-Claude Gaxiot will next month become the first French Communist member of government to pay an official visit to the United States, officials said Friday.

Mr. Gaxiot, who also holds the portfolio for housing, is one of three Communists in the 28-member leftwing government.

In 1983, another Communist minister in a leftwing coalition government visited the United States but at the invitation of U.S. universities.

The United States normally bars Communists, as well as former Nazis and people with contagious diseases from entering the country.

During his trip May 11 to 15, Mr. Gaxiot will stop by in Washington, Atlanta and New York for talks with his counterparts.

He may also put his signature to a Franco-American transport treaty. Mr. Gaxiot earlier this month signed a deal opening up airline traffic between the two countries. It allows for an increase in flights over a five-year transition period, after which unlimited flights will be allowed.

The deal will also enable French airlines to conclude alliances with U.S. airlines. That had been ruled out to date because Washington banned alliances in the absence of a bilateral air agreement.

Yeltsin stresses Kurils are part of Russia

MOSCOW (AFP) — President Boris Yeltsin said Friday that the disputed Kuril Islands would remain part of Russia despite Japanese claims over the archipelago. Interfax news agency reported.

Mr. Yeltsin stressed that the four islands, which span the gulf between the Russian far eastern Kamchatka Peninsula and the northern Japanese of Hokkaido, will remain part of Russia, the agency quoted.

Mr. Yeltsin's spokesman Sergei Yastrzhembsky said, "The president stressed that these islands were and will remain an integral part of the territory of Russia."

The Kremlin spokesman insisted earlier this week that Mr. Yeltsin, despite friendly talks with Japanese Prime Minister

Ryutaro Hashimoto at an informal weekend summit, would guarantee never to cede the islands.

The Kuril dispute has blocked the signing of a peace treaty between Russia and Japan, and both leaders called at their informal summit for a solution to the row over the four small islands, which were taken by Soviet forces in the last days of World War II, but have been claimed by Tokyo ever since.

Mr. Yeltsin called for major joint projects on the disputed islands, including a fisheries plant, port infrastructure and an airport.

Mr. Hashimoto, meanwhile, said Japan was considering supplying diesel-powered generators to residents on the four islands because of the electricity shortages there.

Genscher takes final bow

BONN (R) — Hans-Dietrich Genscher, who as foreign minister played a key role in forging German unity, bowed out of the political limelight Thursday.

The highlight of Mr. Genscher's career came in September 1989, when he stood on the balcony of the West German embassy in Prague to tell thousands of East Germans they need not go back to the Communist regime they had fled.

Making his farewell speech in parliament during a debate on Europe's Monetary Union, 71-year-old Genscher received applause as he said

German unification in 1990 had proved "inseparable" from the wider drive towards a strong Europe.

A former leader of the Liberal Free Democrats, Mr. Genscher played a key role in shaping German domestic politics, helping over the years to keep Chancellors Willy Brandt, Helmut Schmidt and Helmut Kohl in power within coalition governments.

Mr. Genscher, foreign minister from 1974 to 1992 and Germany's longest-serving deputy with 33 years in parliament, has said he is not standing in September's general election.

Police guard Bangladesh campus after deadly gunfight

DHAKA (AFP) — Hundreds of armed police guarded the Dhaka University campus Friday a day after a student activist was killed and 10 others injured in a gunbattle.

Despite tightened security, the campus remained tense but no violence was reported Friday with classes and offices shut for the week's holiday.

Participation in a student league of ruling the Awami League student wing, which called during Thursday's gunbattle with hour-long rallies from the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP).

The Bangladesh Chhatra League, the Awami League student wing, and the BNP's student front Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal blamed each other for the violence.

Police, who intervened after fighting and rained tear gas, said they made no arrests.

The condition of three of the injured students was serious, a campus official said.

The official, who requested anonymity, held "non-student members" mainly responsible for the shooting.

The outsiders are now committing some of the worst crimes, and we are asked police to take action, he said.

The gunbattle came after violence Wednesday when the student groups exchanged as over a number of incidents.

Valencia, Spain (AFP) — A Spanish epidemic apparently triggered by a food-related microbe has sent a wave of panic through the eastern Spanish city of Valencia.

Regional authorities said that 217 people had died positive for the hepatitis C virus in two of the city's hospitals.

According to regional health Minister Juan Farnes, said 80 of those infected

French orchestra suing Pavarotti agents

PARIS (AFP) — A French orchestra says it will sue agents of tenor Luciano Pavarotti for dropping it from a concert because it was too expensive.

The National Orchestra of France (ONF) announced the move after negotiations with the tenor's agents fell through.

Patrice Chéreau said it would sue the agents in France and the United States for "breach of contract and false publicity."

The ONF said it was a "disastrous" decision, taken at an advanced stage of the concert, which Mr. Pavarotti was suddenly asked to perform.

The agents presented a less expensive replacement orchestra.

Mr. Chéreau said cost was the deciding factor. The ONF was due to pick the concert, which Mr. Pavarotti was a star of, for the first time in 1980, when he became president for the first time in 1985. He served a second term as head of state from 1990.

People wishing to pay their last respects had been instructed to gather along the short route from the church to the Caramanlis foundation, where the former leader was to be buried.

As president, Caramanlis was instrumental in steering Greece into the then European Economic Community, now the European Union, in 1981.

He was prime minister from 1955 to 1963 during the monarchy and again from 1974 to 1980, when he became president for the first time in 1985. He served a second term as head of state from 1990.

A writer for Al Aswaq urged the Ministry of Health and Medical Care to carry out a campaign designed to help Jordanians confront and fight cancer. Citing statements by leading specialists declaring that every year 3,500 new cancer cases appear in Jordan, the writer said that this causes alarm and calls also for speedy action on the part of the health authorities. He said that the cancer centre should be open for all types of cancer, and a nationwide awareness campaign should be started as soon as possible to urge people to have medical examinations for early detection of the disease. According to the writer, the number of cancer cases in Jordan has been rising due to the effects of the Israeli-Dimona nuclear reactor on the southern part of the country and on Egypt. He said the government should give immediate attention to this urgent

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Features

Jordan Times, Saturday, April 25, 1998

7

Living with the Palestinian 'catastrophe'

By Ethan Bronner

REHOVOT, Israel — At first, Ibrahim Shikaki is lost amid the widened roads, bowling alley and Toyota garage off Menachem Begin Avenue. But having spent his first 20 years here in what was once the village of Zamouga, he insists that even at age 70 he will gain his bearings. At the intersection of streets remembering Israelis who fought in the 1967 and 1973 wars, he says: "Turn right. The mosque used to be that way."

It still is, up a dirt road, crumbling and fenced off, with six-foot-high weeds climbing a steel door that now bears a Star of David. The sight of the dome from which Shikaki used to call for prayers produces tales of his infant father, the surviving mulberry tree elicits memories of his sister, and the few remaining houses from his era bring to his tongue the names of their former owners — Ahmed Nimr here, Hashem Qassab there.

The Shikakis farmed this land for generations, if not centuries, cultivating wheat and apricots, oranges and cucumbers. In May 1948, they fled the fighting that led to the establishment of Israel and were never permitted back. Their house was demolished and their land given to Jews. Today their former village is on the outskirts of the Israeli city of Rehovot, and the clan lives as refugees in the sand-choked, litter-strewn town of Rafah at the southern edge of the Gaza Strip.

The last half century has not been an easy one for Shikaki, scion of a respected village family eking out a living as a day labourer in the Jewish state. In many ways, his story and that of his eight children — including a founder of Islamic Holy War, a professor, a businessman and unskilled workers — is that of the Palestinian people, a saga of humiliation and fury but also one of emerging accommodation and rebirth.

Israel is observing its 50th anniversary, celebrating the vibrant and democratic regional superpower established upon the ashes of Nazi genocide. But for the Palestinian Arabs, the anniversary marks the Nakba, or catastrophe.

The Arabs had rejected the 1947 U.N. plan to partition British-controlled Palestine into Jewish and Arab states, and when Israel declared its independence the next spring, five Arab countries attacked. By the time the fighting ended, Israel had conquered far more land than had been allotted to it under the plan, and some 700,000 people — half the Palestinian Arab population at the time — had fled or were driven out.

Those who remained within Israel took up the truncated existence of internal refugees, mistrusted and feared, seeking a middle way between their state and their people. The rest were scattered, largely along the Arab World, many in refugee camps in Lebanon, Jordan, Syria and Egyptian-controlled Gaza. They lived from sacks of U.N. rations and in temporary shelters that many have never left. Others ended up in the Arab Gulf, Africa, Europe and the Americas.

Stunned into quiescence for decades, the Palestinians channelled their rage in the late 1960s — after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war left the West Bank and Gaza Strip under Israeli control — through Yasser Arafat's Soviet-backed Palestine Liberation Organisation, hijacking aeroplanes and setting off bombs. In the late '80s, the occupied territories exploded into a rock-throwing, tyre-burning anti-Israel rebellion known as the intifada.

Long preoccupied with their own nation-building, the Israelis could no longer look away. And the Palestinians, in the post-Soviet world, understood they had to scale back their demands. In 1993, on the South Lawn of the White House, the unimaginable occurred: Arafat and the Israeli prime minister,

Yitzhak Rabin, shook hands and agreed on interim limited self-rule for Gaza and portions of the West Bank. There is one year left to that deal, which has stalled under mutual recrimination.

Do Americans know? do they care?

The focus this month on celebration of the events of 1948 has been galling for Palestinians, who feel their agony has been ignored.

"Do Americans know our land was taken by force?" Ibrahim Shikaki asked recently, sitting in his living room in Rafah, the muezzin's call to prayer piercing the early evening air. "Do they care? There were United Nations resolutions demanding we be allowed to go back to our land. But they were not enforced. America imposes resolutions on Iraq but not on Israel."

For most Israelis, the idea of Shikaki's claim to victimhood is chilling. His first-born, Fathi Shikaki, founded the Iranian-backed Islamic Holy War organisation, whose stated goal is to destroy the Jewish state through armed struggle and replace it with a Palestinian state based on Sharia, or Muslim law.

The Israeli military says Islamic Holy War has been behind scores of attacks on Israelis here and abroad, including one on an Israeli tour bus in Egypt in February 1990, in which 9 tourists were killed and 17 wounded. In January 1995, an Islamic Holy War member placed two bombs at a soldiers' hitchhiking post in north-central Israel, killing 20 soldiers and a civilian. In September of that year, a suicide bomber from the same group rammed his car into a bus in the Gaza Strip and caused the death of 7 soldiers and an American student.

Six weeks later, Fathi, in transit to his base in the Syrian capital, Damascus, was assassinated in Malta. Israel does not take responsibility for such operations, but it is nearly universally assumed

both here and abroad that his killing was the work of Israeli agents.

Fathi Shikaki was born in a Gaza refugee camp in 1951 and, like many others, his early years were marked by hardship and displacement. Two-thirds of the one million inhabitants of the Strip are refugees or their descendants and half of them are still in camps. The man who would later view Ayatollah Khomeini as a model and promote street killings and suicide bombings was a gifted pupil. Pushed to study by his illiterate mother, he won a scholarship to medical school in Cairo. He later combined his practice as a physician with gun-running until jailed and ultimately deported by Israel in 1988.

Paradoxically, Fathi was a man of warmth and natural leadership who impressed nearly all who met him with his verbal skill and nuanced mind. He is considered an important Palestinian political theorist, among the first to call for regional Islamic revival through a focus on the Palestinians and to look to Iran as a model for Arabs. This physician was among the first proponents of violence in the Islamic camp.

The paradoxes do not stop there. One of the most thoughtful and critical analysts of Fathi's work is his brother Khalil Shikaki, 44, the second son of Ibrahim and Khadra Shikaki and a political scientist who rejects all violence and works closely with several Israeli scholars.

Khalil Shikaki, who earned his Ph.D. from Columbia University, is a professor at Al-Najah University in the West Bank city of Nablus and director of the Centre for Palestine Research and Studies, one of the few independent research institutes in the Arab World.

Khalil, who looks remarkably like his brother — the same eyes, the same beard, the same build — says the split between them over how to handle the tragedy that befell their parents is common in Palestinian families. "The national and Islamic

ideologies have taken over from the family as a structural unit," he said. "In the past, the families controlled everything with family loyalty coming first and foremost. Now, Islamic and nationalist ideologies have completely transformed Palestinian society."

Khalil's research centre has the feel of a Western academic institution with its beige carpeting and potted plants and young researchers staring at computer screens. But its work, especially its opinion surveys, is pioneering here. Its field workers have had to draw their own maps of towns and neighbourhoods and conduct their own demographic research because of a lack of data.

Palestinians, like most Arabs, are unused to offering opinions on their leaders without fear of reprisal, so the centre has worked hard at training the poll-takers to reduce suspicions among the public. Palestinian and Israeli scholars agree that Khalil's data, which come out monthly, are the most consistently reliable.

West Bankers, Gazans, all in a family

Khalil's wife, Wafa, who is from the West Bank town of Tulkarm, works on an American-financed project promoting democratic attitudes. While she covers her head in Muslim tradition, their three children — Muna, 18, Ibrahim, 14, and Leila, 11 — look very American in their T-shirts and pants. Muna, who does not cover her head, will enter Bir Zeit University next fall and says she wants to devote herself to her people, perhaps as a journalist. She has already begun a muckraking career, having investigated Palestinian police abuse in her town for "The Awakening," the high school newspaper she founded.

"We run lots of features on human rights and democracy," she said. Like most West Bankers, Khalil Shikaki's family rarely makes visits to Gaza. The Israeli authorities do not issue many permits for movement between the two zones because of security concerns. In fact, Palestinians, despite having their own police force and elected parliament and passports and other trappings of self-determination, are subject to Israeli security requirements and often feel caged in by such restrictions. Their autonomous zones are not contiguous and they find themselves faced with Israeli checkpoints on all sides.

So contact between Khalil's family and their Gaza cousins is rare. For Muna and her siblings, their notion of Palestine is limited to the West Bank, a more prosperous and less traditional area of about 1.7 million, compared with the more religious, socially conservative Gaza.

If the split between Khalil and his older brother, Fathi, offers a Palestinian case study, it is their brother next in line, Abdul-Aziz, 42, who may be more emblematic still, embodying common and important contradictions. Another good student and winner of a scholarship to Egypt to become a pharmacist, Abdul-Aziz married his first cousin, Nima, who was studying medicine there. His association with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt led to his expulsion from the country after he completed his studies.

Abdul-Aziz, like most Palestinians, considers his Islamic militant brother a hero, and when his sixth child was born a few months ago, he was named Fathi. As is common in Gaza, Abdul-Aziz is an observant Muslim who prays daily and says he believes that suicide bombers who attack Israelis go to Paradise. He dismisses the 1993 deal between Israel and the PLO on Palestinian autonomy as a sham. He sees no difference between Benjamin Netanyahu, the hawkish Israeli prime minister accused by Arabs of stalling the process, and his

predecessor, Rabin, who was assassinated for his peace efforts. Neither would give the Palestinians what is rightfully theirs, he says.

Finally, Abdul-Aziz insists that there can be no peace or justice until his family wins back its ancestral farmland, a move no Israeli government would countenance and a goal that Arafat's Palestinian Authority has effectively abandoned.

And yet Abdul-Aziz Shikaki's actions reveal a hidden pragmatism. While offering a picture of utter despair, he is in fact deeply engaged in the process of constructing a new Palestinian identity alongside Israel. He owns a building in Rafah that houses his pharmacy along with a variety shop belonging to another brother, Khaled, and apartments for many of the clan's families. Moreover, Abdul-Aziz is part of a consortium of pharmacists and doctors who are establishing the first pharmaceutical factory in the Gaza Strip, in itself part of the nascent industrialisation of the economy that is so vital to creating a viable Palestinian entity after decades of occupation.

Due to open this summer, the Middle East Company for Pharmaceutical Industries will employ 60 full-time workers and produce cough syrup, aspirin-like analgesics, and anti-diarrhoea medicine. Designed by Israeli engineers, with whom Abdul-Aziz has met regularly, and based on international standards, the \$2.5-million enterprise occupies a bright new building near the Israeli border and is gradually filling up with European and American equipment.

An honest respect for Israel's success

Abdul-Aziz has also purchased several acres of farmland in southern Gaza where he and his family cultivate olives, wheat and almonds. His father, Ibrahim, spends a couple hours every day working the land, and the family gathers there most Fridays for work and a picnic. He has begun building a small house on the site.

"I love land, and it is good for my father to come here," he said one afternoon walking between the young olive trees, picking wheat stalks and offering their grains as a snack. "This way my children learn the value of our roots. We like to work here together, irrigating and planting. We make olive oil and give it away to our cousins."

Abdul-Aziz also reveals admiration for what Israel has accomplished, implying an ability to coexist not evident from his other comments. The gap between his words and his feelings is not uncommon among the many Palestinians who regard Israel both as the source of

their misfortunes and the best model for them in the region.

"The Israelis deserve what they have, in many ways," Abdul-Aziz said one evening. "Their democracy is one of their greatest strengths. They have developed a society that is more civilised than ours. We are still suffering from our lack of civilisation. Israel has advanced science and we don't. We are ignorant. Israel is a part of the world. All the world supports Israel."

Foreign support for Israel is a complaint heard among the teachers at the middle school attended by his third child, Ibrahim, 15. Like his West Bank cousin, Ibrahim is founder and editor of a school newspaper. But in keeping with his more religious upbringing, he has named his "The Lamp of Al Aqsa," a reference to the Jerusalem mosque viewed by Palestinians as their national symbol held illegally by Israel. His paper runs Koranic verses and editorials on defending the homeland.

The young were the mainstay of the uprising a decade ago, the so-called "Children of Stones." Many took to the streets and missed school. Today, the Palestinian Authority is seeking to re-educate that generation and repair the torn social fabric.

Ibrahim's school registry lists all pupils with their parents' town or village of origin from 1948, many of them no longer in existence, and the teachers instruct the youngsters never to forget their origins or their struggle to return.

Ibrahim, who says he wants to be a doctor, has never had a conversation with an Israeli aside from hostile exchanges with soldiers at checkpoints outside the Jewish settlements near his house. Some 4,000 heavily guarded and mostly religious Jews still live in Gaza, taking up a third of its land, a source of fierce local irritation. Ibrahim says he cannot imagine making friends with any Israeli.

Palestinian state is 'all we want'

The lives of the other Shikaki siblings are equally reflective of their society. The husbands of two sisters work in Israel in factories and under newly relaxed rules introduced last month often spend the night in Israel rather than returning each day.

A third sister, Leila, lives with the family of her husband, Nabil, who left his work in Israel to join the new armed police force established by Arafat four years ago, perhaps the most palpable symbol of Palestinian autonomy. The mother of five, Leila says the arrival of the Palestinian Authority has made life much safer. She no

longer fears that Israeli soldiers will break in at night in search of suspects and the nightly curfews of past years are gone.

"All we want is our state in the West Bank and Gaza," she said, her 3-year-old daughter, Nibal, on her lap. "But of course, the most important is Jerusalem. Nothing is worth it if we can't have Jerusalem."

Leila's husband, Nabil, has a crisp blue uniform and an AK-47 semi-automatic rifle and sits contentedly at a checkpoint within the Gaza Strip watching cars as they pass near the newly built but unused airport. Israel has continued to oppose the opening of the airport on security grounds, still another issue of contention here. The Palestinian police also face the task of stopping Islamic militants who oppose Arafat's peace deal with Israel.

Despite their anger and religious bent, none of the younger Shikakis appear to have become active either in Islamic Holy War or its larger sister organisation, Hamas, to which about a fifth of the population vows allegiance. Many young Shikakis say they long only for a state in Gaza and the West Bank. This is something Arafat asserts he will declare — following Israel's example 50 years ago — in May 1999, when the interim period in the peace process ends, if negotiations remain stalled.

This fits another new pattern — Palestinians emulating Israel's tactics. There is now a vigorous debate in the Palestinian community as to whether it was a mistake not to have accepted the U.N. partition plan in 1947.

The young Shikakis profess an attachment to their father's old village but none have ever gone there. They seem intent, most of all, on rebuilding their shattered society in their new home.

Typical of this growing pragmatism was a comment by Abdul-Aziz's wife, Nima, who often expresses herself in militant terms. Asked about the moderation of her brother-in-law, Khalil, the political scientist, she said it was his Western education that made him different. She added, "I would be very happy to have all my children educated just like Khalil."

And Abdul-Aziz, offering one of his more radical assertions, caught himself. He insisted that he would give up all he owned in Gaza for "one square metre" of his family's ancestral land and the right to return there. Then he laughed and said, "I can dream, can't I?"

— The New York Times

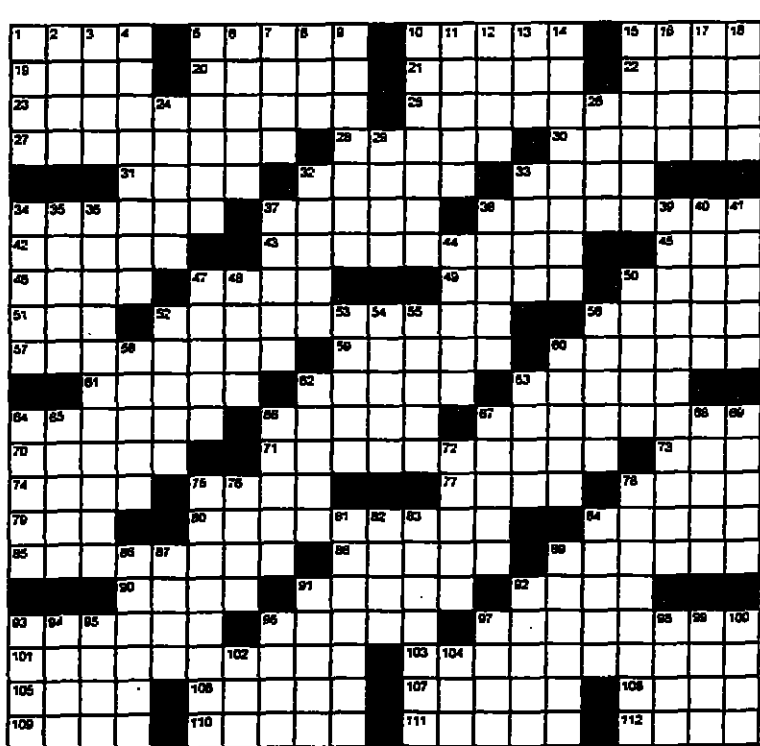
The Saturday Crossword

ANIMAL TALK

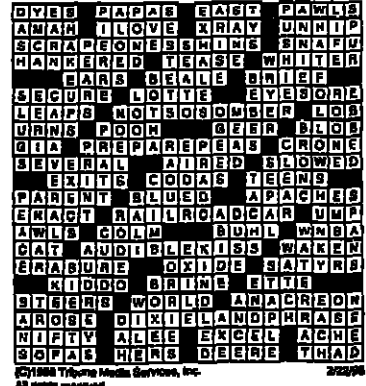
By Edgar Fontaine, Dighton, Massachusetts

- ACROSS
- 1 Brazilian soccer great
 - 5 Parody
 - 10 Deepened
 - 15 Once more
 - 19 Trebek of "Jeopardy"
 - 20 Of ocean motion
 - 21 Of use
 - 22 Vague amount
 - 23 Dubious buy
 - 25 Tue
 - 27 Jewish holiday
 - 28 Disfigure
 - 30 Apple's color
 - 31 Hammered on a silent
 - 32 Female red deer
 - 33 Marshes
 - 34 Fasten tightly
 - 37 ... Domingo
 - 38 Shabbat
 - 42 Greek goddess of peace
 - 43 Ship's semi-precious
 - 45 Zodiac sign for most of August
 - 46 one's heels
 - 47 Occupant of a machine
 - 48 Suckered
 - 50 William, the Quaker
 - 51 State official: abbr.
 - 52 Indoor television antenna
 - 56 Gap in time
 - 57 Life
 - 59 Lean and lanky
 - 60 Poster
 - 61 Displaced

- 62 Every Brothers hit of 1957, "Wake up Little"
- 63 Persona ion
- 64 Shades of black and brown
- 65 ... of Fortune
- 67 Thin coverings, say of silver
- 70 Church singing group
- 71 Gulfair
- 73 Sister Babylon
- 74 ... in the sand
- 75 Eastern wig
- 77 Well-practiced
- 78 Sooty matter
- 79 Ruin
- 80 Hoax
- 84 Shades of black and brown
- 85 Melt
- 88 Job stations
- 89 Listed to one side
- 90 At Capone's nemesis
- 91 Moves at a quick pace
- 92 Wild pig
- 93 Debate
- 96 Polish
- 97 Storage structure
- 101 Dow slump
- 103 Greatest part of anything
- 105 ... noise (bugbear)
- 108 Lure
- 107 Expensive
- 108 Terrible name?
- 109 ... out a living (temporarily)
- 110 Affirmative
- 111 Spooky Belgian artist
- 112 Mosquito, e.g.



Last Sunday's Crossword Solved



- DOWN
- 1 "Hair" producer Joseph
 - 2 Lamb's pen name
 - 3 Table support
 - 4 Alive
 - 5 off (repeated)
 - 6 Like church organs
 - 8 Stench
 - 9 Ridge Boys
 - 10 Cigar container
 - 11 Components of everything
 - 12 Metal containers
 - 13 Moose
 - 14 Became more intense
 - 15 St. Francis of ...
 - 16 Person, place, or thing
 - 17 Send out
 - 18 Dampens
 - 24 Mary a soul
 - 26 Vin and
 - 29 Poker pot starter
 - 32 Part of Hispaniola
 - 33 Across Dunway
 - 34 Long, narrow crest
 - 35 Sweetbudding Flynn
 - 36 Building material for walls

- 37 Uses a stiletto
- 38 Sloppy
- 39 Hopkins-Hurt film (with "The")
- 40 Intuit
- 41 Copper fluid
- 44 Sudden onrush
- 47 Stuffing materials
- 48 Follow orders
- 50 Singer Page or LaBelle
- 52 Estimator
- 53 More authentic
- 54 along (fables)
- 55 Old-womanish
- 56 Dearest
- 58 Bone fide
- 60 Quotes one's own autobiography?
- 62 Seal
- 63 Seal
- 64 Likeable loser
- 65 In front
- 66 Russian sounds
- 67 Split hair
- 68 Speedometer, e.g.
- 69 Located
- 72 Goes on and on
- 75 Special messenger
- 76 West and others, e.g.
- 78 The "Enterprise," e.g.

- 81 Elves
- 82 High time?
- 83 Getty of "The Golden Girls"
- 84 Malas alright
- 86 Accustomed
- 89 More relaxed
- 91 "We hold ... trusts to be ..."
- 92 Drum
- 93 Singer Lane
- 94 Smell strongly (of)
- 95 Entryway
- 96 Appen mode of travel?
- 97 High crags
- 98 Own
- 99 Periods of time
- 100 Concavity
- 102 "Norma ..."
- 104 Charleson or McKellen

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Italians pledge to boost investments and increase joint projects in Jordan

By Francesca Ciriaci
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Italy has pledged to increase its investments and joint ventures in Jordan as a rational consequence to its political role within the European Union (EU) to help stability and improve the economic climate in Mediterranean countries.

"Currently, bilateral trade is characterised by high quality, but Italian investments in the Kingdom are very scarce," admitted Italy's Under-secretary for Foreign Trade Antonello Cabras.

"Though typical of the Italian presence in all international markets, this is a negative element, which the [Italian] government intends to actively reverse," Senator Cabras said Thursday.

Addressing a meeting at the Amman Chamber of Industry (ACI) between a visiting Italian trade delegation and Jordanian officials and businessmen, Senator Cabras said Italy intended to increase joint ventures starting from those sectors in which it excels at the global level, such as garments and wear, mining and stone industry, chemicals and pharmaceuticals, as well as food products.

"Such economic initiatives support and complement our political role in the EU to encourage stability in the Mediterranean countries, thus improving their investment environment and boosting their economic growth," said Senator Cabras, who headed a high-level business delegation on a two-day visit here.

Official statistics for the year 1997 show a wide

imbalance in trade relations between the two countries. While Jordan imported \$242 million worth of Italian goods — mainly machinery and spare parts, pharmaceuticals and bio-chemicals, textile, and marble — the Kingdom's exports to the EU founding member state amounted only to \$19 million — mainly potash, tomato paste, and goat skin.

Nevertheless, Italy has been, until 1996, the first European importer of Jordanian goods and the second EU exporter to the Kingdom, after Germany.

"The practical means for amending the situation is through cooperation in joint ventures and investments in promising products exportable to neighbouring and European markets," said ACI Chairman Khalid Abu Hassan.

Pointing to the already-existing "promising examples of successful Jordanian-Italian joint-ventures," Mr. Abu Hassan urged the Italian delegation to "seriously consider investment in Jordan, where the business climate is very healthy within a free economic system, political stability, and security."

Noting that Jordan's main markets are Iraq, the Gulf countries, and Palestine, Mr. Abu Hassan asked Italy to work for the lifting of the eight-year sanctions against Baghdad and to put pressure on Israel to loosen "the oppressive restrictions on trade exchanges between Palestine and Jordan."

Italy has long advocated the lifting of the U.N. embargo imposed on the Iraqi people, and was among the first countries to open, in late 1996, an inter-

est section in Baghdad.

"Italy can play a supporting role to see the unjust economic sanctions against Iraq removed, and also [to eliminate] the obstacles [facing Jordan's] trade with Palestine because of the Israeli rejection of the peace process," he said.

"Any feasible investment will be most welcome, especially under the Euro-Jordanian Association Agreement, signed in November 1997, which opens wide horizons for cooperation," Mr. Abu Hassan added.

Senator Cabras replied by stressing his government's determination to "best utilise all available instruments, not only at the bilateral level, but especially those established in the Euro-Mediterranean framework and aimed to finance infrastructure development and favour productive investments."

Senator Cabras referred to the Meda programme, launched by the EU in 1996, to financially assist a number of development and production projects in 12 Mediterranean countries, including Jordan.

The Italian delegation included representatives from 10 companies operating in various sectors, ranging from electro-mechanical plants, energy, transport and stone industry, as well as mining, telecommunications, furniture, and food.

The two-day visit, which comes as part of a one-week Middle East tour including Syria and Lebanon, was aimed to boost trade ties between the two countries, and familiarise Italian companies with the Jordanian market.

Around fifty representatives from both medium

and small-scale Jordanian companies, but also big industries, such as the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company and the Jordan Telecommunication Company (JTC), attended the meeting and held talks with Italian counterparts.

"Our objective is to find the right partners for our research centres and scientific institutions," said Mario Pani, from Consorzio 21, a government agency for regional development currently involved in the establishment of a scientific and technological park in Sardinia.

"We are here to evaluate the possibility of joint projects and initiatives," Mr. Pani told the Jordan Times. Most Jordanian participants said they were looking for knowhow and technologies.

"We are looking for new technologies that are already available in Italy but not yet here," said Ahmad Bani Hani, deputy director general for operation and maintenance at the JTC.

Mr. Bani Hani was eager to discuss with his Italian counterpart from the telecommunication company Omicron Industriale SRL intercommunication technology, and especially "carriers" that could equip one telephone line to carry up to 16 subscribers.

Later on Thursday, the Italian delegation and Italian embassy officials held talks at the Ministry of Trade and Industry.

The ministry's secretary general, Mohammad Halaigah, briefed them on investment climate in Jordan and pertaining legislation, as well as steps taken in the wake of the partnership agreement with the EU.

Producers of cosmetics and Al Numeira firm fail to resolve row

By Amy Henderson
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A meeting last weekend between producers of Dead Sea cosmetics and their only supplier to discuss the latter's decision to produce its own cosmetic line failed to end a growing row.

The meeting was held to find "an equitable solution" that would ensure fair competition to local producers and limit the capability of Al Numeira — their supplier owned by the Arab Potash Company — to control the market.

Al Numeira's General Manager Ra'ed Soub assured the meeting that Al Numeira — subject to agreement with the executive board — would continue to sell Dead Sea mud and salt "in any quantity and very good quality at a fair price not exceeding that at which we sell to [the new company]". He pledged that prices of either commodity would not be raised again until after this year.

"Please tell me where it exists anywhere on the free market that suppliers compete with their clients," said Lama Abassi, proprietor of Zara, a leading exporter of Dead Sea cosmetics. "We have learned over the past year not to trust Al Numeira, which said in the past it had no intention of manufacturing cosmetics."

"It's just a new form of monopoly," she added. The Arab Potash Company (APC), which enjoys a concession on the Dead Sea until 2058, established Al Numeira last year to organise the extraction and distribution of Dead Sea raw materials to the country's 40 cosmetic producers. As an APC subsidiary, Al Numeira inherited its mother company's exclusivity at the Dead Sea.

Last week, Mr. Soub announced the formation of a new, independent company, Isal, that would produce and market Dead Sea cosmetics abroad. Ninety per cent of the company's JD1 million equity is owned by Al Numeira, and the remaining ten per cent by the private sector.

Mr. Soub said the producers were invited to share in the company, but producers counter that the offer was hardly lucrative.

"They offered us a ten per cent share among whoever wanted to join in," said Nabil Hassan, whose Lisan line is a totally for-export venture. "That means we would have one seat on the board — what kind of a say do we have in such a company?"

The creation of Isal, they indicated, may be legal, but it breaches the principles of fair competition and business ethics. They accuse Al Numeira of riding on the coat tails they have sewn.

"We have spent lots of time and money developing our products since the mid-80s and making a name for ourselves abroad," said one.

"Now, our supplier decides to become our competitor backed by the resources of the entire potash company. Doesn't anyone see anything wrong with that?"

Producers have called on the Ministry of Industry and Trade to interfere, but, says Ms. Abassi: "Although ministry officials have been sympathetic to the producers' concerns" at the end of the day, they have to follow the law, and Al Numeira technically has abided by the law.

Mohammad Halaigah, secretary general of the ministry and APC Board chairman Saleh Irsheidat said that they would meet with the two sides later this week to help them find an arrangement agreeable to both sides.

Senior Merrill Lynch official lectures on global investment opportunities

AMMAN (J.T.) — As part of a push to increase its private banking portfolio in Jordan, the U.S. investment bank, Merrill Lynch, held a presentation Wednesday on investment

opportunities in global markets. In his presentation, First Vice President and Global Allocation Advisor Douglas Johnson said investors should look into the Japanese market being one

of the most inexpensive equity markets in the world that may provide interesting opportunities for global investors.

Looking at the emerging markets area, Mr. Johnson said in a Merrill Lynch publication, "it is important to recognise that stock prices in general have lost all the gains they had recorded relative to the major developed markets this decade."

"This is a major inconsistency, given the economic momentum we have seen in these regions, even taking the current Asian crisis in consideration," added Mr. Johnson.

But, Mr. Johnson warned against making generalisations about emerging markets. He said: "Asian emerging markets dropped 45 per cent in U.S. dollar terms last year, but Latin America was up more than 28 per cent."

Major European countries, he indicated, are unique among the developed global markets because they are among the few that can actually generate strong economic growth over the next year.

"With so many international economic and political risks around these days, many

investors are starting to question whether it still makes sense to put their money in global markets," said Mr. Johnson.

However, he added, "despite all these potential problems, I am relatively optimistic about global investment opportunities. Remember that markets and economies are extraordinarily changeable."

Jordanians are looking to diversify in more attractive instruments in international markets and take advantage of liberalised central bank rules that allow them to invest in global markets.

At a reception on Wednesday, Vice Chairman of Merrill Lynch International Bank Limited Makram Zaccour emphasised the importance the bank places on Middle Eastern markets saying Merrill Lynch was keen on increasing its business in these markets.

But, Mr. Zaccour stressed the importance for Arab countries to integrate into the global economy and privatise their state-owned enterprises in order to attract foreign investments.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SATURDAY, APRIL 25, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Be respectful to an older person today. You don't have to feign it, because what you feel is genuine. And when you actually are impressed with somebody, you come right out and say so, leaving no doubt about your sincerity. Do that this morning.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Spend the morning cleaning out closets and tossing out trash. That would include a couple of old grudges and some unpleasant memories. A full spring housecleaning starts in your own mind. Either communicate your unhappiness to the appropriate person or simply forgive and forget.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) The festivities may have lasted until this morning. Hopefully you didn't inhibit yourself much last night, because you're going to have to do that tonight. There's an old obligation you're finally going to have to meet. Go ahead and face it head on.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) Authority figures are something of a nuisance again. They have all sorts of hoops for you to jump through. Go along with the programme and don't complain. This evening, you can tell your friends how you really feel. They'll be much more interested in hearing that side of the story anyway.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Travel and excellent conversation are predicted for this weekend. You and a friend will resolve many of the world's great issues, or at least figure out the best tactical approach. Get there on time, though. If you're visiting an older person, he or she is going to notice if you're late.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) This is not a good day for a garage sale. People will want to argue over pennies. It's a better day for a drive with friends. Go with someone who likes to listen to classical music on the radio and hardly ever raises his or her voice unless it's in song.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You and your sweetheart need to discuss a serious topic this morning. Then you can go shopping. Buy something you've been dreaming about, but don't spend too much money. One of you could come down with case of buyer's remorse this evening.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Do what you can for a partner who's under pressure. It's partially because he or she has no experience in this kind of work. You may not have much experience either, but you've got a different perspective. You can see what's going on much better than your friend can.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You're at your best first thing this morning. Later, you'll have to work for anything you get. Luckily, you should be in the mood, especially if you're doing a household project. Your sweetheart may also be persuaded to help. Give it a try. It looks like it'll be a lot more fun that way.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) You and your family or roommates need to have a talk this morning. Set up an agenda for the weekend so everybody understands what's going to happen. Also, discuss finances. If they don't know about hidden costs now, when you ask them for money later there will be a problem.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) You've been gathering information from a wide variety of sources for the last several days, and you're closer to mastering this subject. Don't get too cocky. Tonight you'll run into a situation where you feel clueless. That's OK. Part of the game is in the learning, remember?

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) This is a good day to go shopping. You need to buy something to help you figure out the next step in your journey. That could be a book, tools or even a musical instrument. Don't worry. It's all right for you to have something you want. You don't have to spend every cent on your loved ones.

Birthstone of April: Diamond — Amethyst

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THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

ACROSS
1 Movie pig
5 Streetcar
9 Of the Vatican
14 Black in poetry
15 Singer
16 Florida city
17 Digitalis source
19 Ached
20 Stupely
21 Plods with effort
23 Dropout's 2nd chance
24 Expired
26 "Aladdin" prince
27 Social wisp
32 Part of NOW
35 Bosc or anjou
36 Personal pension SS
37 August
38 Ethel
40 Get out of bed
41 Relatives
42 Spiny African plant
43 Musical selection
44 Pompous person
48 TV classic
49 "You... There"
49 Writer Morrison
50 Letters in the theater
53 Period of decline
57 Reaper follower
59 Purple shade
60 Make palatable
62 Arboreal
63 Three-spot
64 Lombard or Ness
65 Ruhr valley city
66 Remnants
67 As far as

DOWN
1 Shroud in mist
2 Overhead
3 Spurred
4 Art print, briefly
5 Scoop-shaped garden tool
6 Make known
7 Jurist Fortas
8 Upright pole
9 Trendy
10 Tangle
11 Spasm of distress
12 To shelter
13 Young guys
18 Carrying a burden
22 Hindu prince
25 Superlatively dumb
27 Desire
28 Dranch
29 Fork-tailed filer
30 Clapnet or idle
31 Biblical weed
32 Oriental fryers
33 Skip
34 Program choices
38 Remove air from pipes
39 Five-and-a-half yards
40 Pose for a portrait
42 "The Queen"
43 Noisy person
45 Feminine (endearment)
46 Evidenced
47 Filings
50 Nose into
51 Respond
52 Correct: brief.
53 Actress
54 Life stories, for short
55 Fictional Gil
56 First family of Ferrara
58 Legal grp.
61 Coffee vessel

Peanuts

I CHANGED MY MIND. I DECIDED I DON'T WANT A GARDEN...

WHAT ABOUT ALL THE WEEDS I DUG UP?

PUT 'EM BACK WHERE THEY WERE...

I SHOULD HAVE NUMBERED THEM...

Andy Capp

I THINK YOU'RE BEING A BIT FASTIDIOUS, MAUREEN...

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH! FLO—YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE BEING WARRIED TO A MEAN MAN!

CAN'T SAY I DO—I'M BLESSED WITH BEING TIED TO A GENEROUS ONE WHO NEVER HAS ANY MONEY

Mutt'n'Jeff

WE GOTTA CONSERVE ON OUR DROUGHT. WE CAN AFFORD ONLY THIS MUCH STEAK!

FINE MANNERS YOU HAVE! IF I HAD REACHED FIRST, I WOULD HAVE TAKEN THE SMALLER PIECE!

WELL, YOU GOT IT. DON'T YOU?

WHAT'S THE MATTER? I DON'T ENJOY THE MEAT? I DON'T COOK?

THEN WHY DO YOU BUY EVERYTHING IN SHOPS?

BECAUSE IT GIVES ME NO QUESTIONS ABOUT THE NUTS ABOUT BICARBONATE OF SODA!

THE BETTER HALF By Glasbergen

"I'm not sure what a diet breakfast should be, so I had a bowl of salad with milk and sugar on it."

JUMBLE THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME by Hazel Arnold and Mike Angillon

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

RIFAY

ROMIN

LEHBER

GURTIA

Answer here: " " " " (Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: TABOO CHESS UNLIKE "ABSURD" Answer: The Wall Street trader turned farmer involved in this — STALKS AND BONDS

Business Daily
A review of
Beverages, food
of loans from I

THE INDUSTRIAL
Bank will be distributing JD1 million in dividends following the general assembly approval to give the shareholders a 10 per cent return on their investment. The bank recorded a JD1.05 million profit before allocations last year. The bank's allocations stood at JD1.4 million in 1997, which was around 15.5 per cent of the 1996 figure. The bank earned in 1997 was JD1.2 million, while only JD0.5 million were paid as dividends.

The shareholders' equity totalled JD34.8 million at the end of 1997, more than the total in 1996. The balance sheet total at the end of 1997 was higher by 5.5 per cent, at JD101.8 million, while the total assets stood at JD124.7 million at the end of 1997, a decline by around 1.5 per cent from the volume of loans extended. The bank explained this situation, noting that it disbursed large amounts of approved loans last year, which in 1996, the funds paid were higher. The report showed the bank's 1997 medium and long-term loans standing at JD55.9 million, while the finance industrial, tourism and projects amounted to 198 million. The bank's total assets stood at JD147 million, while the total liabilities and service projects stood at 108.8 per cent of the total assets in 1997 with the remainder 38.2 per cent.

REUTERS
The Business

Major Currencies & Cross Rates

| Currency | USD | DEM | GBP |
|-------------|--------|--------|--------|
| US Dollar | 1.0000 | 1.7912 | 0.6936 |
| DE Mark | 0.5583 | 1.0000 | 0.3363 |
| GB Sterling | 1.5670 | 2.9671 | 1.0000 |
| CH Franc | 0.6705 | 1.1957 | 0.4406 |
| JP Yen | 0.0076 | 1.3668 | 0.0048 |
| CA Dollar | 0.6963 | 1.2316 | 0.4322 |
| IT Lira | 0.0006 | 1.0107 | 0.0003 |
| NL Guilder | 0.4938 | 0.8395 | 0.2337 |
| FR Franc | 0.1664 | 0.2981 | 0.0937 |

Energy

| Oil | Last | Revised | SAE |
|------------|--------|---------|--------|
| Brent | 13.50 | 13.52 | 13.50 |
| WTI | 12.96 | 13.03 | 12.96 |
| Bonny | 13.50 | 13.52 | 13.50 |
| Dubai | 12.31 | 12.53 | 12.31 |
| Uthmaniyah | 155.00 | 158.00 | 155.00 |

JOD Cross Rates

| Currency | Buy | Sell |
|-------------|--------|--------|
| US Dollar | 0.708 | 0.710 |
| GB Sterling | 1.1818 | 1.1877 |
| DE Mark | 0.3941 | 0.3961 |
| CH Franc | 0.4764 | 0.4788 |
| FR Franc | 0.1175 | 0.1181 |
| JP Yen | 0.5428 | 0.5455 |
| NL Guilder | 0.35 | 0.3518 |
| IT Lira | 0.3985 | 0.4006 |

Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

Bourse

| Index | Val |
|------------|-------|
| New York | 8084 |
| DOW JONES | 8084 |
| S&P 500 | 1113 |
| London | 5844 |
| FT-SE 100 | 5844 |
| Nikkie 225 | 18013 |
| Paris | 3783 |
| CAC 40 | 3783 |
| Frankfurt | 5144 |

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Swedish Tel

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Beverages, food industries take largest share of loans from Industrial Development Bank

**** THE INDUSTRIAL Development Bank** will be distributing JD2.48 million in dividends following the general assembly approval to give the shareholders a 15 per cent return on their investments. The bank recorded a JD4.05 million net profit before allocations last year. The amount after allocations stood at JD3.42 million which was around 16.5 per cent higher than the 1996 figure. The total interest earned in 1997 was JD12.3 million but only JD6.3 million were posted as net earnings.

The shareholders' equity totalled about JD34.8 million at the end of 1997, 12.24 per cent more than the total in the previous year. The balance sheet total, at JD143.47 million, was higher by 6.83 per cent. The growth in outstanding credits was 12.7 per cent as the amounts increased from JD110.68 million at the end of 1996 to JD124.70 million at the end of last year despite a decline by around 17.3 per cent in the volume of loans extended in 1997. The bank explained this situation by indicating that it disbursed large amounts of approved loans last year compared to 1996. The funds paid were higher by 36 per cent, the bank's annual report said.

The report showed the bank extended 179 medium and long-term credits totalling JD35.93 million in 1997 to finance industrial, tourism and service projects compared to 168 loans totalling JD43.47 million extended in 1996. Industrial and service projects benefited from 68.8 per cent of the credits extended in 1997 with the remaining 31.2 per cent

of the loans going to touristic projects. Food industries and beverages took the largest share (35.95 per cent) of loans to the industrial sector last year. In second place, came the chemical and plastic industries which acquired 25.91 per cent of the credits followed by the metal and equipment industries which took 12.02 per cent of the loans. The rest benefited paper, textile, wood and other non-metal industries. As to the purpose of the loans granted to the industrial sector, 54.33 per cent were for equipment and machinery, 28.38 per cent were for raw materials, 12.19 per cent for industrial construction, 1.21 per cent for discounting bills and 3.89 per cent to finance risk capital projects.

Geographically, the Amman governorate took the largest share of the number and volume of the loans with 52.5 per cent and 49.8 per cent respectively. Zarqa, Balqa, Madaba, Mafrqa, Ma'an and Irbid came in second to seventh place as listed. Board chairman Saad Al Tai told the general assembly that the bank also approved extending 132 craftsmanship loans for a total of 1.13 million last year. The number and the volume compare with 32 credits totalling JD213,490 during 1996.

Finally, the bank continued to provide brokerage services to investors at the Amman Financial Market. In 1997, the amount executed in this area totalled JD12.4 million which represents approximately three per cent of the total trading at the stock exchange. (Al Aswaq + Al Rai).

Demand for 'major shares' boost AFM trading

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Turnover at the Amman Financial Market (AFM) recorded a remarkable increase in the past week trading compared with previous week's performance, the stock market's weekly bulletin indicated Friday.

The bulletin showed that the turnover amounted to JD11.3 million, an increase

of 144.7 per cent over the JD4.7 million recorded a week ago. Daily turnover amounted to JD2.3 million.

"Investors focused on specific companies which are preparing to hold their annual meeting and are expected to distribute profits to their shareholders," Naim Naqeb, a broker at the AFM, said.

Mr. Naqeb told the Jordan Times that the bulk of the weekly trading con-

centrated on the shares of the Arab Bank, especially on Wednesday when more than 8,000 shares changed hands in two separate contracts.

Mr. Naqeb said trading also focused on the shares of the Housing Bank, the Arab Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Company and the Jordan Refinery Company.

The bulletin indicated that banking sector got the lion's


share of the weekly trading with a volume amounting to JD5.8 million, or 44.8 per cent of the total trading.

The industrial sector ranked second with a JD4.7 million, or 41.8 per cent, services sector with JD1.3 million, or 11.7 per cent and finally the insurance sector with JD200,000.

The general price index also registered an increase of 0.96 point to reach 170.7 points.

Mr. Naqeb said that the increase in the general price index was due to the demand for "major shares" in the market, which include the Arab and Housing banks and the JRC.

Out of the 99 firms that changed hands at the stock market, 34 recorded increase in the prices of their shares, 39 recorded decrease and 26 firms witnessed no change in their prices.

| AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---------|----------------------------|--------------|--------|------------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|--------|--------|---------------|--------|---------------|
| HOUSING BANK CENTER - AMMAN - JORDAN | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| TELEPHONE: 602771 / 601179 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ORGANIZED MARKET TRADING ACTIVITY FOR THE PERIOD (18/04/1998 - 22/04/1998) | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| WEEKLY REPORT | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|  | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| DURING THE LAST 3 WEEKS | | COMPANY NAME | P/E | DIV | NO. OF CONTRACTS | NO. OF SHARES | VALUE TRADED JD | OPENING PRICE | HIGH | LOW | CLOSING PRICE | CHANGE | AVERAGE PRICE |
| HIGH | LOW | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 380.000 | 333.500 | ARAB BANK | 14.2 | 1.15 | 54 | 11920 | 4129670 | 344.00 | 348.00 | 344.00 | 348.00 | +4.00 | 346.468 |
| 1.780 | 1.640 | JOR. NATIONAL BK. | 14.3 | 3.28 | 78 | 49945 | 89084 | 1.73 | 1.83 | 1.74 | 1.76 | +0.03 | 1.784 |
| 1.370 | 1.250 | BANK OF JORDAN | 4.1 | 0.00 | 15 | 6600 | 8874 | 1.30 | 1.35 | 1.30 | 1.30 | -0.05 | 1.345 |
| 1.000 | 0.920 | MID. EAST INV. BK. | 62.4 | 0.00 | 1 | 5000 | 4750 | 1.00 | 1.05 | 0.95 | 0.95 | -0.05 | 0.950 |
| 1.130 | 1.100 | INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK. | 9.2 | 7.92 | 212 | 11313 | 35350 | 1.00 | 1.01 | 0.97 | 0.97 | -0.03 | 1.004 |
| 5.500 | 5.050 | THE HOUSING BK. | 18.2 | 3.48 | 212 | 11313 | 65142 | 5.34 | 5.99 | 5.15 | 5.75 | +0.11 | 5.759 |
| 1.860 | 1.790 | JOR. NAT. BANK | 9.0 | 0.00 | 28 | 27106 | 49401 | 1.80 | 1.85 | 1.80 | 1.84 | -0.04 | 1.823 |
| 1.690 | 1.590 | JOR. GULF BANK | 4.0 | 10.45 | 43 | 49450 | 33764 | 1.59 | 1.69 | 1.67 | 1.67 | -0.02 | 1.680 |
| 2.800 | 2.640 | ARAB JOR. INV. BK. | 39.4 | 2.56 | 3 | 16000 | 41750 | 2.64 | 2.65 | 2.60 | 2.60 | -0.04 | 2.609 |
| 2.700 | 2.700 | ARAB JOR. INV. BK. NEW | 444.4 | 0.00 | 2 | 2000 | 5350 | 2.70 | 2.65 | 2.60 | 2.60 | -0.10 | 2.625 |
| 1.970 | 1.790 | JOR. ISLAMIC BANK | 17.7 | 0.00 | 66 | 37827 | 67635 | 1.76 | 1.86 | 1.76 | 1.86 | +0.10 | 1.793 |
| 1.070 | 1.020 | UNION BK. SAV. INV. | 169.0 | 0.00 | 1 | 2200 | 2332 | 1.07 | 1.06 | 1.06 | 1.06 | -0.01 | 1.060 |
| 1.970 | 1.790 | JOR. INV. FIN. BANK | 10.9 | 0.00 | 5 | 1271 | 2235 | 1.75 | 1.75 | 1.70 | 1.70 | -0.05 | 1.743 |
| 1.620 | 1.420 | JOR. INV. FIN. BANK/NEW | - | 0.00 | 7 | 2100 | 3403 | 1.62 | 1.63 | 1.62 | 1.63 | +0.01 | 1.620 |
| 1.880 | 1.820 | BEST-AL-NAL (BIDRA) | 16.85 | 16.85 | 11 | 3050 | 2648 | 1.87 | 1.89 | 1.85 | 1.89 | +0.02 | 1.868 |
| BANKS SECTOR | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1.100 | 1.100 | ARABIAN SEAS INSUR. | 9.1 | 0.00 | 5 | 125100 | 125104 | 1.10 | 1.04 | 1.00 | 1.00 | -0.10 | 1.000 |
| 2.220 | 1.980 | JOR. FRENCH INSUR. | 6.0 | 11.74 | 14 | 29928 | 65558 | 2.22 | 2.22 | 2.10 | 2.13 | -0.09 | 2.191 |
| INSURANCE SECTOR | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2.340 | 2.050 | JOR. ELECTRIC PWR. | 10.4 | 5.07 | 75 | 41385 | 90125 | 2.10 | 2.20 | 2.14 | 2.17 | -0.02 | 2.178 |
| 2.350 | 2.060 | JORD. ELECTRICITY | 14.6 | 4.24 | 2 | 500 | 1142 | 2.35 | 2.35 | 2.20 | 2.26 | -0.09 | 2.288 |
| 3.330 | 3.040 | UNION. OWNERS PED. | 11.5 | 4.14 | 1 | 100 | 290 | 3.04 | 2.90 | 2.90 | 2.90 | -0.14 | 2.900 |
| 2.100 | 2.100 | SHIPPING LINES | 7.2 | 3.81 | 1 | 500 | 1050 | 2.10 | 2.10 | 2.10 | 2.10 | -0.00 | 2.100 |
| 1.130 | 1.020 | WATL. PORTFOLIO | 42.3 | 0.00 | 46 | 76750 | 78984 | 1.07 | 1.08 | 1.06 | 1.06 | -0.01 | 1.069 |
| 1.820 | 1.700 | REDA. RESTATE INV. | 18.4 | 0.00 | 9 | 4853 | 8253 | 1.70 | 1.80 | 1.70 | 1.70 | -0.10 | 1.748 |
| 1.380 | 1.360 | JORD. INTL. TRAD. | 0.00 | 0.00 | 9 | 6000 | 2612 | 1.36 | 1.38 | 1.37 | 1.37 | -0.01 | 1.379 |
| 9.300 | 9.060 | ALRAI | 9.0 | 6.82 | 1 | 50 | 440 | 9.06 | 8.80 | 8.80 | 8.80 | -0.26 | 8.800 |
| 1.200 | 1.120 | MID. EAST HOTELS | 17.4 | 0.00 | 6 | 38800 | 44234 | 1.20 | 1.18 | 1.14 | 1.14 | -0.06 | 1.140 |
| 4.810 | 4.150 | ARAB INTL. INV. EDUC. | 10.1 | 1.98 | 15 | 101250 | 405250 | 4.20 | 4.20 | 4.00 | 4.05 | -0.15 | 4.002 |
| 970 | 900 | JORDAN EXPRAT. INV. | - | 0.00 | 2 | 2000 | 1790 | 9.00 | 9.00 | 8.80 | 8.80 | -0.20 | 8.800 |
| 970 | 940 | ARAB EDUCATION | 16.5 | 0.00 | 2 | 21250 | 2125 | 9.40 | 9.40 | 9.20 | 9.20 | -0.20 | 9.200 |
| 1.560 | 1.450 | UNITED CO. | 6.9 | 7.10 | 168 | 64000 | 100540 | 1.40 | 1.61 | 1.53 | 1.55 | -0.07 | 1.571 |
| 1.670 | 1.670 | UNION LAND DEV. | - | 0.00 | 1 | 5000 | 3300 | 1.67 | 1.66 | 1.64 | 1.64 | -0.03 | 1.640 |
| 1.170 | 1.170 | UNITED FOR FINAN. INV. | 7 | 11.03 | 14 | 75000 | 82950 | 1.17 | 1.11 | 1.10 | 1.11 | -0.06 | 1.106 |
| SERVICES SECTOR | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1.100 | 1.100 | ATTACHEES | - | 0.00 | 1 | 1200 | 1320 | 1.10 | 1.10 | 1.10 | 1.10 | -0.00 | 1.100 |
| 2.950 | 2.710 | JOR. CEMENT FACT. | 16.7 | 3.91 | 74 | 52567 | 151555 | 2.90 | 2.93 | 2.81 | 2.81 | -0.09 | 2.883 |
| 3.900 | 3.050 | JOR. PROSPERITY MINES | 32.3 | 0.00 | 3 | 1400 | 4270 | 3.05 | 3.05 | 3.05 | 3.05 | -0.00 | 3.050 |
| 5.900 | 5.700 | ARAB PORTER GEN. STORAGE | 28.1 | 3.51 | 8 | 20150 | 74828 | 5.60 | 6.20 | 5.70 | 5.70 | -0.50 | 5.740 |
| 11.100 | 10.550 | JOR. PETROL REFINERY | 10.7 | 8.08 | 77 | 36157 | 397570 | 10.94 | 11.15 | 10.90 | 11.00 | -0.04 | 10.996 |
| 1.460 | 1.190 | WOOLLEN INDUSTRIES | 12.4 | 6.99 | 7 | 2650 | 3804 | 1.45 | 1.45 | 1.42 | 1.43 | -0.02 | 1.435 |
| 1.310 | 1.150 | INDUSTRIAL COMM. ACN. | - | 0.00 | 21 | 15455 | 18920 | 1.15 | 1.24 | 1.16 | 1.20 | +0.05 | 1.209 |
| 6.370 | 6.370 | JOR. MORTGAGE BANK | 8.3 | 3.16 | 1 | 10000 | 63700 | 6.37 | 6.37 | 6.32 | 6.32 | -0.05 | 6.320 |
| 5.460 | 5.080 | ARAB PHARM. MARK. | 16.3 | 3.63 | 432 | 70351 | 151387 | 5.23 | 5.16 | 5.23 | 5.23 | +0.18 | 5.230 |
| 1.510 | 1.470 | LIVESTOCK & POULTRY | 14.4 | 0.00 | 28 | 33350 | 16349 | 1.47 | 1.50 | 1.49 | 1.49 | -0.01 | 1.490 |
| 1.730 | 1.670 | ARAB PAPER COMM. TRD. | 23.2 | 0.00 | 18 | 23700 | 17151 | 1.71 | 1.76 | 1.71 | 1.76 | +0.05 | 1.724 |
| 1.540 | 1.540 | NATIONAL INDS. | - | 0.00 | 36 | 31200 | 17819 | 1.54 | 1.55 | 1.55 | 1.57 | +0.02 | 1.570 |
| 4.10 | 4.10 | INTERNATIONAL PETRO. CHEN. | 10.1 | 0.00 | 101 | 135400 | 94256 | 4.00 | 4.00 | 3.99 | 4.00 | -0.01 | 4.000 |
| 1.550 | 1.520 | JOR. RECYCLING CHEN. | 321.2 | 0.00 | 1 | 100 | 54 | 1.53 | 1.54 | 1.54 | 1.54 | -0.01 | 1.540 |
| 1.420 | 1.360 | UNIV. CHEN. INDS. | 14.7 | 5.56 | 34 | 6946 | 9883 | 1.36 | 1.47 | 1.36 | 1.44 | +0.08 | 1.419 |
| 1.160 | 1.120 | KAT. CABLE WIRE. NEAC | 28.4 | 0.00 | 89 | 78250 | 93122 | 1.14 | 1.21 | 1.15 | 1.18 | -0.04 | 1.190 |
| 1.590 | 1.540 | JOR. SULPHUR CHEN. | 11.4 | 0.00 | 128 | 143300 | 87303 | 1.58 | 1.62 | 1.59 | 1.60 | +0.02 | 1.609 |
| 1.360 | 1.290 | ARAB FRUIT. CHEN. | 15.1 | 4.38 | 71 | 33461 | 45517 | 1.32 | 1.38 | 1.30 | 1.37 | +0.05 | 1.361 |
| 1.530 | 1.470 | KANTIER INVEST. | 11.2 | 0.00 | 1 | 150 | 78 | 1.50 | 1.52 | 1.52 | 1.52 | -0.02 | 1.520 |
| 1.030 | 1.030 | UNIV. CHEN. INDS. | 14.0 | 6.82 | 37 | 18930 | 16857 | 1.03 | 1.08 | 1.03 | 1.08 | -0.05 | 1.080 |
| 1.780 | 1.680 | JOR. INDS. RESOURCES | 9.3 | 14.49 | 26 | 17500 | 12194 | 1.68 | 1.70 | 1.68 | 1.68 | -0.02 | 1.680 |
| 1.480 | 1.460 | KAT. CEMENT | 10.3 | 6.80 | 18 | 12800 | 18884 | 1.46 | 1.48 | 1.46 | 1.47 | -0.01 | 1.475 |
| 1.380 | 1.300 | JOR. PET. CHEN. CO. | 13.7 | 10.31 | 81 | 108851 | 11806 | 1.30 | 1.33 | 1.30 | 1.33 | +0.03 | 1.330 |
| 1.380 | 1.300 | EL. ZAY READY WEAR | 14 | 4.50 | 14 | 4950 | 688 | 1.30 | 1.40 | 1.37 | 1.37 | -0.03 | 1.377 |
| 1.190 | 1.160 | INTL. TOBACCO | 7.0 | 0.00 | 157 | 22468 | 282739 | 1.18 | 1.21 | 1.19 | 1.21 | +0.03 | 1.214 |
| 1.190 | 1.010 | UNION CH. & YEG. | 10.5 | 0.00 | 36 | 27000 | 32057 | 1.05 | 1.06 | 1.00 | 1.05 | -0.05 | 1.048 |
| 1.660 | 1.620 | JORDAN STEEL | 8.8 | 8.84 | 34 | 45184 | 74719 | 1.62 | 1.63 | 1.62 | 1.62 | -0.01 | 1.620 |
| 1.000 | 1.000 | ARAB READY COMPLE. | 7.3 | 16.55 | 186 | 575100 | 110419 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | -0.00 | 1.000 |
| 1.000 | 1.000 | ARAB INTL. FOOD FACT. | 53.2 | 0.00 | 3 | 460 | 466 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 0.97 | 0.97 | -0.03 | 0.970 |
| INDUSTRIAL SECTOR | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1801 | 1843614 | 3693371 | INDEX NUMBER | 180.90 | CHANGE: +1.592 | | | | | | | | |
| GRAND TOTAL | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2735 | 2815878 | 9781230 | INDEX NUMBER | 170.74 | CHANGE: +0.962 | | | | | | | | |
| DURING THE LAST 3 WEEKS | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| HIGH | LOW | COMPANY NAME | P/E | DIV | NO. OF CONTRACTS | NO. OF SHARES | VALUE TRADED JD | OPENING PRICE | HIGH | LOW | CLOSING PRICE | CHANGE | AVERAGE PRICE |
| 1.950 | 1.910 | EXPORT & FIN. BNC. 75% | 17.0 | 0.00 | 19 | 17989 | 12207 | 1.92 | 1.94 | 1.92 | 1.92 | -0.02 | 1.929 |
| 1.220 | 1.050 | ISLAMIC INSURANCE CO | 108.6 | 0.00 | 1 | 2750 | 1100 | 1.15 | 1.15 | 1.15 | 1.15 | -0.00 | 1.157 |
| 1.330 | 1.330 | CENTRAL CHEN. STORAGE | - | 0.00 | 1 | 2750 | 908 | 1.33 | 1.33 | 1.33 | 1.33 | -0.00 | 1.330 |
| 1.390 | 1.390 | JOR. TRADE FAC. | - | 0.00 | 78 | 374450 | 152085 | 1.40 | 1.41 | 1.40 | 1.40 | -0.01 | 1.406 |
| 1.610 | 1.580 | RHEL. COMM. CENTERS | - | 0.00 | 2 | 430 | 246 | 1.58 | 1.59 | 1.54 | 1.54 | -0.04 | 1.547 |
| 1.490 | 1.480 | ARAB FIN. INVEST. | - | 0.00 | 40 | 137900 | 55477 | 1.48 | 1.49 | 1.48 | 1.48 | -0.01 | 1.482 |
| 1.780 | 1.740 | UNION TRV. 92% | 0.00 | 0.00 | 44 | 143556 | 37762 | 1.76 | 1.78 | 1.75 | 1.75 | -0.03 | 1.764 |
| 1.140 | 1.140 | SARA FOR INVESTMENT | 74.8 | 0.00 | 3 | 700 | 786 | 1.14 | 1.14 | 1.08 | 1.14 | -0.06 | 1.123 |
| 1.690 | 1.670 | AL-DAMLIVAR | 8 | 2.54 | 6 | 7950 | 5304 | 1.67 | 1.68 | 1.66 | 1.66 | -0.02 | 1.667 |
| 1.000 | 1.000 | AL-SHARQ INV. CO. | 352.1 | 0.00 | 15 | 164028 | 144028 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | -0.00 | 1.000 |
| 1.260 | 1.160 | SERIALIZED JOR. 75% | 78.9 | 0.00 | 7 | 50300 | 21274 | 1.16 | 1.16 | 1.16 | 1.16 | -0.00 | 1.157 |
| 2.000 | 2.000 | CUTCHERY TRV. GROUP | - | 0.00 | 7 | 70000 | 140000 | 2.00 | 2.00 | 2.00 | 2.00 | -0.00 | 2.000 |
| 1.470 | 1.450 | ARAB FOOD & MED. | - | 0.00 | 8 | 4400 | 2004 | 1.47 | 1.46 | 1.45 | 1.45 | -0.02 | 1.455 |
| 1.430 | 1.360 | ARAB INTL. TRV. TRD. | 42.6 | 0.00 | 123 | 353700 | 173673 | 1.36 | 1.41 | 1.36 | 1.37 | -0.04 | 1.389 |
| 1.340 | 1.320 | JOR. INTL. MATCH-JEMCO | - | 0.00 | 18 | 38500 | 5005 | 1.33 | 1.33 | 1.33 | 1.33 | -0.00 | 1.330 |
| 1.350 | 1.350 | WATL. TEXTILE | 6600.0 | 0.00 | 1 | 600 | 198 | 1.35 | 1.35 | 1.35 | 1.35 | -0.00 | 1.350 |
| 1.360 | 1.340 | MAVAN DICH & WORLD | 0.00 | 0.00 | 2 | 6000 | 334 | 1.34 | 1.34 | 1.34 | 1.34 | -0.00 | 1.340 |
| 1.570 | 1.570 | UNIVL. METALS | - | 0.00 | 2 | 250 | 150 | 1.57 | 1.60 | 1.60 | 1.60 | +0.03 | 1.600 |
| 1.430 | 1.410 | MIDESTAY PHARM. 90% | - | 0.00 | 44 | 24182 | 12531 | 1.42 | 1.43 | 1.41 | 1.41 | -0.02 | 1.415 |
| 1.640 | 1.640 | OFFICIALS. BAKING IND. | - | 0.00 | 7 | 50300 | 21274 | 1.64 | 1.64 | 1.63 | 1.63 | -0.01 | 1.630 |
| 1.650 | 1.430 | UNION TOBACCO 75% | - | 0.00 | 49 | 100267 | 129326 | 1.43 | 1.66 | 1.60 | 1.66 | +0.03 | 1.390 |
| 1.700 | 1.670 | BAEI PHARM. | - | 0.00 | 14 | 23391 | 16020 | 1.67 | 1.67 | 1.67 | 1.67 | -0.00 | 1.675 |
| 1.640 | 1.580 | ADVANCED PHARMA. IND. | - | 0.00 | 63 | 143727 | 81646 | 1.62 | 1.63 | 1.62 | 1.63 | +0.01 | 1.628 |
| 1.280 | 1.270 | IND. ENG. | - | 0.00 | 35 | 46981 | 18460 | 1.27 | 1.28 | 1.28 | 1.28 | -0.00 | 1.283 |
| 1.510 | 1.480 | IND. CHEMICAL | 13.1 | 0.00 | 7 | 2928 | 1309 | 1.50 | 1.50 | 1.49 | 1.50 | -0.01 | 1.498 |
| 1.340 | 1.340 | I-TEXTILE MANUF. | - | 0.00 | 1 | 5000 | 1600 | 1.34 | 1.32 | 1.32 | 1.32 | -0.02 | 1.320 |
| 1.400 | 1.400 | PEARL BAN. P. CONV. | - | 0.00 | 1 | 300 | 320 | 1.4 | | | | | |

First Division Basketball Championship Playoffs enter final round as Ahli take on Jazireh today

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Al Ahli take on Al Jazireh Saturday in the opening match of the final playoff round of the First Division Basketball Championship.

Al Jazireh had managed to beat Al Ahli 78-63 in the first leg playoff match after a tight first half which ended 33-32. Al Orthodoxi had also beat Al Ahli 84-61.

As the results stand so far, Al Ahli are now not only out of contention but have lost their runner-up spot which they held onto last year when Al Jazireh won the title leaving Al Orthodoxi third.

Al Ahli's poor physical conditioning and incomplete bench coupled with ill-effects of inadequate pre-season training led to an inconsistent form that forced them to rely on the individual efforts of Faisal Nsour and Yousef

Zaghoul.

The lineup has been depleted with Mohammad Shamali and Marwan Ma'touq both nursing injuries, and centre Ramez Hammoudeh quitting the team for personal reasons.

Al Jazireh are currently second after losing 65-61 and conceding the lead to Al Orthodoxi in their latest match.

Al Jazireh and Al Orthodoxi will now have to repeat their wins over Al Ahli before they meet again on May 1 to determine this year's winner.

With score difference tied, Al Jazireh only need a win by any score

to retain the title.

In the preliminary round, Al Jazireh beat Al Orthodoxi 92-84 and lost 73-69. They beat Al Ahli twice 75-69, and 57-53. Al Orthodoxi beat Al Ahli 74-49 and 69-37.

After ending Al Orthodoxi's 1976-1989 undisputed reign, Al Ahli were champions in 1990, 1992, 1993 and 1994 aided by the signing of Naser Bushnaq.

Al Orthodoxi came back to win in 1991, 1995 and 1996 and Al Jazireh ended a 30-year domination among the two rivals last season.

PLAYOFF STANDINGS

| Team | P | W | L | Sf | Sa | Pts |
|-----------|----|----|---|------|-----|-----|
| Orthodoxi | 12 | 11 | 1 | 986 | 660 | 23 |
| Jazireh | 12 | 10 | 2 | 1029 | 710 | 22 |
| Ahli | 12 | 6 | 6 | 796 | 768 | 18 |

Rockets upset Jazz 103-90 in first night of playoffs

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) —

The first night of the playoffs brought the first upset.

Clyde Drexler scored 22 points, including 15 in the second half, and Kevin Willis had 18 points and 14 rebounds as the Houston Rockets shocked the top-seeded Utah Jazz 103-90 Thursday night in the opening game of their first-round playoff series.

Utah entered the playoffs with homecourt advantage, a 12-game home winning streak and a six-game winning streak against the Rockets.

But it all evaporated as the Jazz, looking tentative and sloppy, shot 43.6 per cent from the field and allowed the Houston frontcourt to score almost at will.

The series resumes Saturday night, when the Rockets will be looking to take a 2-0 lead as they try to become just the second No. 8 seed in playoff history to win a first round series.

Houston already has history on its side. Of the 128 best-of-5 series in NBA history, the team winning the first game has gone on to win the series 83 per cent of the time.

Hornets 97, Hawks 87: In Charlotte, North Carolina, Glen Rice outduelled Steve Smith to help the Hornets end a pair of



San Antonio Spurs center David Robinson (C) tries to split the Phoenix Suns defence of forward Antonio McDyess (L) and forward Cliff Robinson during first period NBA playoff action (Reuters photo)

droughts.

Rice made 13 consecutive field-goal attempts during one stretch and wound up with 34 points on 15-for-19 shooting as Charlotte defeated Atlanta for the first time in five games this season.

The Hornets, who shot 59 per cent — their second-highest percentage of the season — also broke a five-game postseason losing streak dating back nearly three years.

Smith scored 16 of his 35 in the first quarter for Atlanta, which had capitalized on superior speed from its guards to defeat Charlotte by an average of 17 points during the regular season.

The Hawks were able to do that again in the first half Thursday night, scoring 20 points on layups, dunks and tip-ins, but Charlotte cut that

figure to eight in the second half.

Pacers 106, Cavaliers 77: In Indianapolis, the Pacers, back in the playoffs for the first time in two years, didn't look like they had skipped a beat.

Chris Mullin scored 20 points, including four 3-pointers, and Reggie Miller had 11 of his 19 points in the first quarter as Indiana trounced Cleveland.

The Pacers shot 69 per cent (11-of-16) in each of the first two periods and were up 31-18 after a first quarter in which Cleveland was limited to 36 per cent shooting (8-of-22) and had seven turnovers.

Indiana led by at least nine points the rest of the way and improved to 26-0 this season when scoring at least 100 points.

Shawn Kemp and Zydrunas Ilgauskas provided most of the offense for the Cavaliers. Kemp scored

25, but needed 22 shots to reach the figure. Ilgauskas

had 16 on 7-of-11 shooting. • Spurs 102, Suns 96: In Phoenix, Tim Duncan scored 28 of his 32 points in the second half, including 18 in the fourth quarter, as the Spurs made up two seven-point deficits night to beat the Suns.

Duncan showed his offensive talents with a variety of moves inside or on the baseline, especially down the stretch when he made five baskets and two free throws in a personal 12-6 run while being guarded by Hot Rod Williams. Phoenix's best big-man defender, Antonio McDyess.

David Robinson had 26 points, 15 rebounds, five assists and four blocks for the Spurs, who trailed 81-74 with 9:58 left, and Avery Johnson had 11 of his 22 points in the first quarter.

Kevin Johnson led the Suns with 18 points.

Batistuta eyes English football

DUBLIN (AFP) —

Argentina goal machine Gabriel Batistuta admits he could join an English Premiership club — despite rejecting a number of offers to come to England earlier this season.

The 29-year-old striker, who has scored over 100 goals for Fiorentina in four Serie A campaigns in Italy, said: "When it is time for me to look for a new challenge I would certainly consider playing in England."

"There are already so many excellent players there making it a very exciting competition but wherever I go I want to join a team that will be involved in challenging for a title."

The Premiership's big three — Arsenal, Manchester United and Liverpool — are all believed to have inquired about a price for Batistuta who scored his 37th goal for Argentina in his 55th international in the 2-0 win over the Republic of Ireland in Dublin on Wednesday.

But asked who had made the offers to him, he said: "I can't remember really. In any case I was happy playing for Fiorentina and I still am."



Mary Joe Fernandez from the USA returns to Olga Barabanshikova during the Women's Classic Tennis Tournament in Johannesburg. Fernandez won in two straight sets 6-2 6-2 (Reuters photo)

SCOREBOARD

ATP Tour U.S. Clay Court Championships

2nd rd

Alex Calatrava (Spa) bt Herman Gumy (Arg)

4-6, 7-6 (7-5)

retired

Marcio Carlsso (Bra) bt Grant Stafford (Rsa x7)

6-4, 3-6, 6-2

Michael Chang (USA x1) bt Franco Squillari (Arg)

7-6 (7/2), 6-4

Andrei Pavel (Rom) bt Justin Gimelstob (USA)

7-6 (7/5), 6-2

American League

Tampa Bay 12

Cleveland 5

Texas 5

Chi White Sox 4

National League

Pittsburgh 7

Milwaukee 2

San Diego 4

Colorado 4

Montreal 5

Philadelphia 6

Atlanta 3

Houston at NY Mets — Postponed

San Francisco 0

Los Angeles 1

Chicago Cubs 1

Florida 3

St Louis 2

Cincinnati 3

Arizona 1

NBA

First-round playoff (All Series Best Of Five):

Eastern Conference

At Indianapolis

Indiana 106

Cleveland 77

(Indiana Leads Series, 1-0)

At Charlotte

Charlotte 97

Atlanta 87

(Charlotte Leads Series, 1-0)

Western Conference

At Salt Lake City

Houston 103

Utah 90

(Houston Leads Series, 1-0)

National Hockey League

Playoffs (series best-of-seven)

Eastern Conference Quarterfinals

(Montreal Leads Series, 1-0)

Montreal 3

Pittsburgh 2 (OT)

(St Louis Leads Series, 1-0)

St Louis 8

Los Angeles 3

Celtic enter the home straight

GLASGOW (AFP) — The chase for the Scottish Premier Division title has been a three-horse race all season — but come the final whistle on Saturday, Celtic could have the winning post in their sights.

With just three matches to go, the Glasgow giants, aiming for their first league title in 10 years, are three points clear of bitter rivals Rangers and six ahead of Hearts.

Rangers, bidding for a record 10th successive title, face a tough trip to Hearts, who they also face in the Scottish Cup final next month, while Celtic have the easier prospect of a home game against basement club Hibs.

The bookmakers have made up their mind about the probable destination of the title with William Hill quoting Celtic 1-4 on favourites with Rangers adrift at 11-4 against Rangers' 1-0 defeat at Aberdeen on Sunday was a major blow to Walter Smith's hopes of ending his glittering seven-year managerial reign at Ibrox on a triumphant note.

For the past decade Rangers have led while Celtic have trailed behind, and now Smith is demanding his players show the same application but avoid the end result which has previously haunted the Parkhead outfit.

"In previous seasons when we have led the division, teams below us have worked hard to keep up the pressure on us," he says.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TAMARA HIRSCH
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TRUMP COUP TOMMYLANDS ANOTHER

North-South vulnerable. South deals.

NORTH

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♥ Q 8 5 4

♦ K 8 2

♣ A 5

EAST

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♥ K 7 6 3 2

♦ Q 9 8

♣ A 8 6 2

WEST

♠ 10 7 4

♥ Void

♦ A J 8 3

♣ A K 9 7 4 3

SOUTH

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♦ 10 7 6 4

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Bilbeisi wins Speed Test as Shadian brothers finish 2nd and 3rd

By Roufan Nahhas
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Ghaith Bilbeisi in a Toyota Starlet TRD was crowned champion of the Second Pepsi Speed Test Friday held at the new improved race track at the Royal Automobile Club of Jordan (RACJ). Khatchik Shadian in a Renault 5 Turbo came second and elder brother Barkev Shadian in a Honda Civic came in third. Yasser Jarrar, who lost the first round of the Speed Test in April with a split of a second to Bilbeisi, came in eighth after the organising committee gave him a ten-second penalty for arriving late at the RACJ.

Twenty five competitors took part in the event which consisted of two rounds and an additional third one for the best ten drivers. Champion Faris Bustami had bad luck when he took a wrong turn in the first round and his car faced some mechanical problems in the second. The Shishani brothers: Edmer and Hassan, competed for fourth and fifth places. Edmer finally finished fourth. The event lacked the feminine touch with Abeer Batikhi the only women driver to compete while names like Tala Shawa, Suha Tabaa' and Maya Mufti were absent. Mufti who took part in several past speed tests here in the Kingdom is leaving to Lebanon to take part in Rally du Liban. She will be partnering Lebanese co-driver Hala Nasser Al Dein in a Nissan Pulsar through the Lebanese mountains on May 2. The third round of Pepsi Speed Test will start May 2. RACJ is also preparing for the May 13-14 Jordan International Rally, considered one of the most important rallies in the Middle East.

Juventus and Inter meet in potential decider

PARIS (AFP) — Juventus and Inter Milan, arguably the two greatest clubs in Italian football history, meet on Sunday in a game that could decide this season's Serie A title.

Juventus, seeking their 25th league championship, are currently one point in front of Inter with only three games left after Sunday's showdown at the Delle Alpi stadium in Turin.

A victory over Inter, however narrow, and the title is in the bag.

The clash is also telescoping into a duel between the two great players of the current season — Juventus' Alessandro Del Piero and Inter's Brazilian ace Ronaldo.

Juventus coach Marcello Lippi said: "They are two great champions... and I'm expecting both of them to win applause for what they do with the ball. Of the two, I just hope the matchwinner is Del Piero."

Juventus will clearly start out as favourites.

They are the reigning champions, they have home advantage and team morale is sky high after reaching their third consecutive European Cup final.

They also have the self-belief that comes from having seen off their only other title rival three weeks ago, when they beat Lazio 1-0 in Rome.

But the threat from Ronaldo has to be kept under control.

Bayern Munich will welcome captain Thomas Helmer back from injury for Sunday's crucial Bundesliga game against Bayer Leverkusen, but striker Giovanni Elber has been told to hold off his comeback for another week.

Elber broke his collar bone and damaged shoulder ligaments against Werder Bremen three weeks ago and the Brazilian is anxious to play again.

Time is running out for Bayern if they want to reel in Kaiserslautern — and a win over Leverkusen is a must.

A loss would leave Christoph Daum's Leverkusen side breathing down their necks and endanger their place in next season's European Champions' League.

Kaiserslautern, who play Borussia Monchengladbach on Friday night, head the league with 60 points, Bayern have 59 and Leverkusen 53. Bayern, though, have only have three games still to play and the other pair four.

Lens and Metz have made the French title chase a two-horse race and though leaders Lens are favoured, this weekend's penultimate fixtures could push the balance either way.

Northern Lens, who won in Cannes last Friday, host mid-table Bastia on Saturday with a two-point lead over eastern club Metz, who visit Toulouse.

Lens then travel to Auxerre

two weeks later while Metz also have a tough final match at home to UEFA Cup hopefuls Lyon.

None of the chasing pack have a chance of the league title or a European Champions League spot by finishing runners-up. Third-placed Marseille's 2-1 defeat at Auxerre last Saturday ended their faint hopes of reliving the glory days of their four consecutive titles from 1989 to

their 15th Spanish title but the fight for the second European Champions League spot is really hotting up.

Only four points separate Real Madrid in second spot and Celta Vigo who are in sixth, the last UEFA Cup qualifying spot.

Madrid, of course, would make absolutely sure of being in the Champions League should they win their seventh European Cup title in Amsterdam on May

European Soccer Preview

1992.

Paris Saint Germain have already qualified for the European Cup Winners Cup but Monaco, who visit the Parc des Princes, will be motivated to hang on to a UEFA Cup spot.

Lyon are in seventh spot and will be out to earn a victory over Cannes to try and keep UEFA Cup challengers Auxerre and Bastia at bay.

At the other end of the table, it is even more intense with six teams mathematically capable of falling into one of the three relegation spots.

Cannes and Chateauroux will probably go down, but Toulouse, Strasbourg, Rennes or third-from-bottom Guingamp are still not out of danger. Barcelona have already won

20. Club president Lorenzo Sanz said on Thursday that each member of the current first team squad of 23 players will receive 40 million pesetas (\$262,000) if they beat Juventus.

Madrid coach Jupp Heynckes has a clause in his contract that he will receive an extra 60 million pesetas (\$393,000) if he leads Real to their first European Cup triumph since 1966.

Barcelona are at Espanyol in a local derby on Saturday and Real Madrid visit third-from-bottom Merida, who are just one spot above the relegation zone. On Sunday, Celta Vigo host third-placed Athletic Bilbao on Sunday and Real Betis entertain Mallorca on Saturday.

Korda fails again, Sampras back to No. 1

MONTE CARLO (AFP) — Reluctant Czech Petr Korda failed on Friday on his fourth chance in ten weeks to take over the World No. 1 computer ranking.

A 4-6, 7-6 (7/1), 6-1 quarter-final loss to former Wimbledon champion Richard Krajicek sealed the 30-year-old Australian Open champion's unlucky fate.

Korda had previous chances to grab the top spot over the past two months at Antwerp in February and Indian Wells and Lipton in the U.S. last month.

Each time, the Czech failed to win the match he needed to assume the number one place in the game.

Krajicek will play a semi-final on the red clay Saturday against Spain's Carlos Moya.

The 1997 Australian Open finalist defeated sixth-seeded compatriot Alex Corretja, last year's losing finalist at the Monte Carlo Country Club to Chile's Marcelo Rios, who is nursing an elbow injury and could be out for several



Petr Korda

more weeks.

Korda's defeat means that Pete Sampras, hammered into a 6-1, 6-1 hole Thursday by Frenchman Fabrice Santoro here in the third round, will get back the top spot when the next rankings are released on Monday at the close of the Mercedes Super 9.

Krajicek said that he was never sure of victory until the end.

"It was very difficult to fight back," said the Dutchman, playing in only his fifth event of the year after taking time off for the birth of his first child.

"I never like to play Petr, he's a left-hander and he plays quickly. It would have been easy to get frustrated. I was lucky to get back into it in the second

set. "In the third, I played well on the clay. It was sunny today and the ball travelled faster. I look forward to the semi-final."

Korda was playing in his first clay event since losing to Spaniard Galo Blanco at the French Open last spring. The Czech has taken a month off since competing at the Lipton in late March.

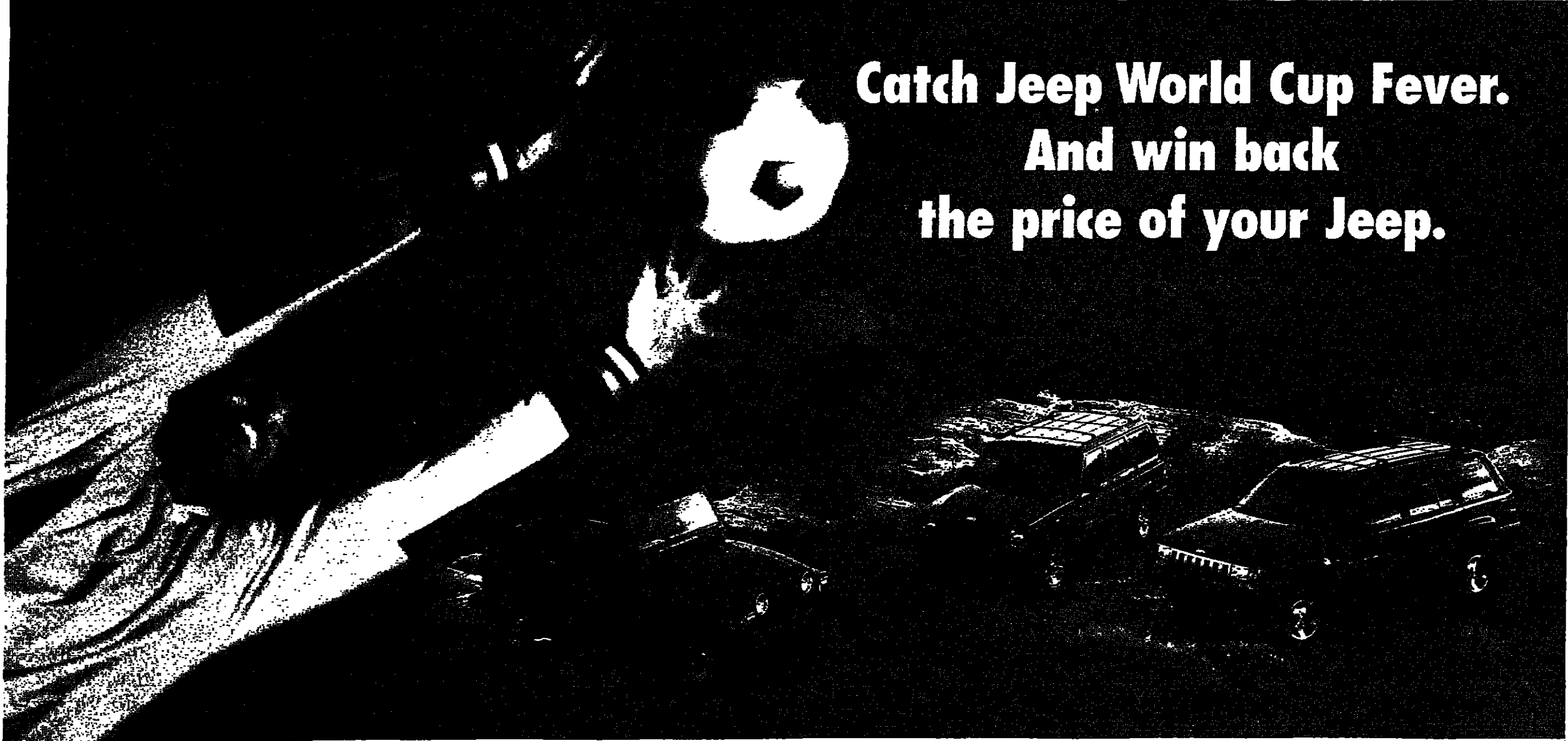
Boris Becker, a three-time finalist who — like Korda — has never won a clay court title, was aiming for the semifinals with a match against Spaniard Alberto Berasategui, seeded 12.

Frenchman Cedric Pioline and Santoro were squaring off in another quarterfinal.



Richard Krajicek

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Duma approves new Russian premier

MOSCOW (AP) — The Russian Parliament confirmed Boris Yeltsin's candidate for prime minister on the third and final vote Friday, ending a month-long political standoff that nearly brought the dissolution of the legislature.

The vote was a lopsided 251-25 in favour of Sergei Kiriyenko, who had previously faced strong resistance from the Communist Party and other opposition groups. He needed 226 votes to be confirmed.

The outcome was a key victory for Mr. Yeltsin, who had refused to offer any other candidates to lead a new Russian government.

Mr. Yeltsin and Mr. Kiriyenko will form a new cabinet soon and try to re-energise stalled economic reforms.

"I realise that for many of you this decision required a lot of courage," Mr. Kiriyenko told lawmakers after the vote.

"Today's vote clearly shows that none of us needs great upheavals, and we all need a great Russia," he added.

As acting prime minister for the past month, Mr. Kiriyenko has led a government that handled routine matters, but did not make major policy decisions. Boris Nemtsov, the acting first deputy premier, said the backlog of pressing economic issues would force the new cabinet to work "on weekends and nights, 24 hours a day." A guff

Gennady Zyuganov, the Communist Party leader, could not hide his displeasure.

"I don't see any grounds for joy," Mr. Zyuganov snapped. "The government's course should be revised." Lawmakers had rejected Mr. Kiriyenko twice in the past two weeks by solid margins. But many swallowed their pride Friday and supported Mr. Kiriyenko to avoid the disbanding of parliament's lower house, the State Duma.

If Mr. Kiriyenko had lost, Mr. Yeltsin would have been empowered to dissolve the legislature, call early elections and simply appoint Mr. Kiriyenko as prime minister.

Before the vote, Mr. Kiriyenko said his faction would again oppose Mr. Kiriyenko and did not fear the dissolution of parliament.

"We are not afraid of new elections. We are a serious party and we will not change our decision to vote against Kiriyenko," Mr. Zyuganov said.

But it appeared that many Duma members, including dozens of Communists, chose not to vote. Only 276 ballots were cast in the 450-seat house.

Before the balloting, the bespectacled Kiriyenko addressed deputies in his customary fast and assured manner, outlining the cabinet's plans.

"The enormous number of

problems in the economy makes us all share responsibility for the fate of Russia. Let us respond to this challenge by deeds and not by words. We have no time to waste," Mr. Kiriyenko said.

The disbanding of parliament and a new round of parliamentary elections would have added to Russia's political turmoil at a time when the country needs to deal with pressing economic and social woes.

Many Russians are fed up with the inability of politicians to solve chronic problems and it's not clear which faction would have come out on top. As a result, none expressed a desire for early elections.

The Communists had been the most outspoken critics of the 35-year-old Kiriyenko, calling him too young and inexperienced to solve Russia's massive social and economic problems.

Mr. Yeltsin had insisted that Mr. Kiriyenko, a former banker and energy minister, was the right man for the job and will breathe new life into economic reforms.

In forming the new government, Mr. Yeltsin has made it clear that key ministers — including Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov and Defence Minister Igor Sergeev — would retain their posts.



Acting Prime Minister Sergei Kiriyenko introduces his wife Marina to President Boris Yeltsin during former Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin's 60th birthday reception. Russia's lower house of parliament ended a month-long crisis on Friday by confirming reformer Kiriyenko as prime minister, preventing its own dissolution and costly early elections (Reuters photo)

Madonna battered by her pride and joy

NEW YORK (AP) — Madonna's pride and joy apparently gave her a hook and jab. The pop star showed up at a movie premiere party with a bruised left eye she got last week while playing with daughter Lourdes, the Daily News reported Friday. It seems the Material Mom was bouncing the 18-month-old tyke on her lap when the child's head smacked into the bone under her eye. In a black off-the-shoulder top and tight pants, the battered Madonna was still the belle of the ball, schmoozing with former boyfriend Warren Beatty at Wednesday night's party for the new Robert Downey Jr. film, "Two Girls and a Guy."

Campbell donates bra

NEW YORK (AFP) — British supermodel Naomi Campbell has donated one of her bras to a campaign aimed at raising awareness of breast cancer. Her intimate apparel will join 10,000 other bras that eventually will be hooked together to form the Hudson River separating New York and New Jersey states, the New York Daily News said. The campaign is entitled "Bras Across The Hudson."

Irons defends Lolita film

LONDON (AFP) — Actor Jeremy Irons Thursday defended the controversial film "Lolita" based on Vladimir Nabokov's novel of a middle-aged man's tragic sexual obsession for a 12-year-old girl, in which he plays the lead. At a debate held after the first screening of the film in Britain, in the central English town of Warwick, Irons denied Lolita glorified paedophilia. "Paedophiles can derive pleasure from bank advertisements and soda ads," he said. "I do not believe we are hanging out dirty knickers for people to sniff. Forgive me for being so crude," he said.

'They really, really don't like me' — Streisand

NEW YORK (AP) — They don't like me. They really, really don't like me. Barbara Streisand says of the media. She told Mirabella magazine that she wants to know "why the media hates me?" For instance, when she was doing research on schizophrenia for "Nuts" at a state hospital, someone asked her "Are you as mean as they say?" "This kind of cynical press is going to be responsible for a decline in American civilisation. It's like the fall of the Roman Empire," Ms. Streisand said. At 56, she wears a diamond engagement ring and seems happy with actor James Brolin. She feels like she's "21 and starting over again."

'Primary Colours' to open Cannes film festival

PARIS (AFP) — Mike Nichols' "Primary Colours," which stars John Travolta as a philandering governor on the U.S. presidential trail, is to open this year's Cannes film festival. The movie, which also stars Emma Thompson, has already been released to a decidedly lukewarm reception in the United States. It opens the 51st edition of the festival on May 13. It tells of the scandal-ridden presidential campaign of Jack Stanton, the charismatic governor of a southern U.S. state — Bill Clinton in all but name. Thompson plays his wife Susan, who helps hold his campaign together. Roland Emmerich's "Godzilla" will close the festival on May 24.

White House decides to maintain large military force in Gulf

WASHINGTON (AP) — Despite the Pentagon's eagerness to reverse its troop buildup in the Gulf, the White House has decided it is too soon to ease military pressure on Iraq.

"There is no change in our force posture in the region, nor likely will there be any time in the immediate future," White House Press Secretary Mike McCurry said Thursday.

At a meeting Wednesday of U.S. President Bill Clinton's chief national security advisers it was decided to keep the 38,000 U.S. forces in the Gulf — compared with roughly 20,000 that had been there before the build-up early this year — at least until the U.N. Security Council completes its regular review of sanctions

against Iraq, said an administration official speaking on condition of anonymity.

Iraq usually toughens its rhetoric against the sanctions during the U.N. review period. It stuck to that pattern Thursday, demanding that the Security Council end its economic embargo unconditionally. It also accused U.N. arms experts of spreading "fallacies and lies" about Iraq's weapons programs.

The Security Council imposed crippling economic sanctions on Iraq in 1990 after Iraqi President Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, saying it would only lift them when U.N. inspectors confirm that Iraq has destroyed its weapons of mass destruction programmes.

The Pentagon sent extra forces to the Gulf — including a second aircraft carrier and other warships, Army troops, and fighters and bombers — early this year after Iraq refused to open certain sites to U.N. weapons inspectors. The crisis was defused in February, and while inspections have resumed unimpeded, U.N. officials say little real progress has been made.

The U.S. military services are feeling a heavy strain from keeping the extra troops and supplies in the Gulf. Mr. McCurry was asked whether Iraq remains at risk of a U.S. military strike.

"We remain in a position to use the necessary means at our disposal to achieve the objectives of the international community," Mr. McCurry replied.

He said Iraq was far from meeting all of those objectives, including conclusive answers to questions about the size and scope of Iraq's chemical and biological weapons programmes.

"That situation has changed only in that the government of Iraq has been more compliant in allowing necessary inspections," he said. "They have not been fully compliant in meeting the stipulations of existing U.N. Security Council resolutions." The U.S. military force in the Gulf includes about 18,000 sailors and Marines, 9,000 air force troops, 7,800 army soldiers and 2,600 other personnel assigned to headquarters staff.

Lebanese president calls for new constitution

BEIRUT (AFP) — Lebanese President Elias Hrawi has called for a new constitution and a non-sectarian presidential system allowing the head of state to be directly elected, a newspaper reported on Friday.

"The constitution is not sacred and needs a complete revision," Mr. Hrawi said in an interview with Al Nahar newspaper.

"The Lebanese state will never see the light of day under the Taef constitution," he said, referring to 1989 document drafted at the Saudi resort of Taif where Lebanese leaders reached a national reconciliation accord ending the country's 15-year civil war.

"I have learned during my term that there would not be a state in the way stipulated under the constitution draft-

ed in Taef," he said.

Mr. Hrawi, a Maronite Christian, called for a new presidential system allow-

'The Lebanese state will never see the light of day under the Taif constitution'

ing the head of state to be elected by direct public vote instead of parliament and to be chosen from any of the country's religious communities.

Mr. Hrawi's six-year term was renewed for another three years in 1995 and expires in November.

Under the current system, the president should be a Christian Maronite, the prime minister a Sunni Muslim and the house speaker a Shiite Muslim. The president is elected by the parliament.

Mr. Hrawi, however, downplayed the chances of a Muslim becoming president, referring to the rivalries between Sunni and Shiite Muslims, saying he expected the head of state to be elected from Christian minorities.

Since 1996, Mr. Hrawi has been calling for amendments to the constitution to grant greater powers to the president.

Settlers: Army prepared maps for 11-13 per cent W. Bank pullback

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israel is considering proposals to withdraw troops from 11 per cent or 13 per cent of the West Bank, up from a previous offer of nine per cent, Jewish settler leaders said Friday.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's top adviser said various plans were being studied, but that no decision had been made.

The adviser, David Bar-Ilan, said Israel was ready to be flexible, but that a 13 per cent pullback, as proposed by the United States, was out of the question.

Mr. Netanyahu and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat are to hold separate talks with U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright in London on May 4. Mr. Arafat has tentatively accepted the U.S. proposal, forgoing earlier demands for a much larger troop pullback.

In hopes of softening Israel's positions, two senior U.S. State Department officials, Dennis Ross and Martin Indyk, were to arrive in Israel over the weekend. U.S. Vice President Al Gore was also expected to take a stab at Mideast diploma-

cy when he arrives Thursday to attend 50th independence day celebrations. Mr. Gore is to stay for two days and hold talks with Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Arafat.

Israel and the Palestinians have been deadlocked for months over the scope of a West Bank withdrawal, and also disagree over how many pullbacks Israel should carry out.

Abraham Domb, a leader of the Jewish Settlers' Council, said that there were many signs that Mr. Netanyahu was softening his position.

Mr. Domb said that at Mr. Netanyahu's request, the army has drawn up maps for both an 11 per cent and a 13 per cent withdrawal. Mr. Domb told the Associated Press that he and other settler leaders were given a glimpse at the maps.

The Palestinians now have full or partial control over 27 per cent of the West Bank in scattered areas. Under the withdrawal proposal, they would solidify their hold by winning control over three large blocs of land — one around the cities of Nablus and Jenin, a second around the

town of Ramallah, and a third around the town of Hebron, Mr. Domb said.

If the withdrawal is carried out, as many as 19 Jewish settlements would turn into isolated enclaves in Palestinian-controlled areas, the settler leader said.

Mr. Domb said that if the government approved the pullback, more than a dozen legislators would make good on their threats to bring down Mr. Netanyahu.

Mr. Bar-Ilan said the government was not expected to make a decision on the scope and timing of the withdrawal before Mr. Netanyahu holds talks with Mr. Ross and Mr. Indyk next week. He said many plans were being considered, but that "13 per cent cannot be done." The Palestinians, meanwhile, said the May 4 meetings with Ms. Albright will constitute a moment of truth in which Israel will have to show whether it was serious about making peace.

"The peace process now stands at a very serious crossroads, either it will move ahead or collapse," said a statement by the Palestinian cabinet.

Hamas founder says it will retaliate for Sharif's killing

DOHA (AFP) — Hamas founder and spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmad Yassin has vowed to retaliate against Israel over its alleged involvement in the murder of the group's chief bomb-maker last month.

"Agents working for Israel are implicated in the murder of the engineer Mohieddin Sharif," Sheikh Yassin said in remarks published in Qatari newspapers on Friday.

"We know our enemy well and we will retaliate at a chosen time and place," said Sheikh Yassin, who is on a five-day visit to Qatar.

"Hamas operations against the Israeli army and armed settlers will continue, while suicide operations will be our response to attacks by the Zionist entity against Palestinian civilians," he said.

The discovery of Sharif's bullet-riddled body in the West Bank town of Ramallah on March 29 triggered a new round of tension between the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA).

Hamas has repeatedly accused Israel, with Palestinian collaboration, of murdering Sharif but the PNA says Sharif was killed in a power struggle in the movement's armed wing.

"The whole truth about Sharif's murder will be published once the Hamas inquiry is completed," said Sheikh Yassin.

U.K.'s MI6 thwart Iran's efforts to procure nuclear technology

LONDON (AFP) — Britain's foreign intelligence service, MI6, has thwarted Iranian attempts to procure British nuclear technology, British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook has revealed in an unprecedented break with traditional secrecy.

In a speech late Thursday, Mr. Cook said that MI6 and the GCHQ communications monitoring agency had "tracked Iran's nuclear weapons programme, and have enabled us to disrupt Iranian attempts to procure British technology."

He also told an audience in London that the two agencies had played a "crucial role" in revealing Iraqi President Saddam Hus-

sein's biological and chemical weapons programmes and his "continuing ambitions to stockpile these weapons of mass destruction."

A security source told the Independent newspaper that Mr. Cook was referring to successful counter-espionage work carried out by British agents against Iranians attempting to obtain technology from Britain in the past year.

The MI6 and GCHQ operations are understood also to include the prevention of efforts to smuggle out materials used to build nuclear weapons, the London daily said.

Although Mr. Cook's pre-

decessors have spoken in parliament of the work of the secret services, it is the first time a foreign secretary has been so open about specific operations.

In his speech before businessmen in the City of London, Mr. Cook also praised the work of the secret services in helping customs and police to seize tonnes of drugs and make dozens of arrests, and in countering money-laundering and fraud.

Mr. Cook said he had been impressed with the work of Britain's security agencies during the Labour government's first year in office.

Islamist mayor surrenders to serve jail sentence in Turkey

ANKARA (AP) — The Islamist mayor of a small town surrendered to authorities Friday to serve a one-year jail sentence for insulting Kemal Ataturk, the founder of the modern, secular Turkish state.

Sukru Karatepe, the mayor of Kayseri in central Turkey, said in a 1996 speech that his "heart was bleeding" because he had to attend a ceremony honouring Ataturk.

Earlier this week, Istanbul Mayor Recep Tayyip Erdogan was sentenced to 10 months in prison for a

speech he made during a rally. He remains free pending appeal.

Both mayors were convicted of "inciting hatred based on religious differences." The conviction of the Istanbul mayor drew criticism from the United States.

"It is a serious matter when democratically elected leaders are subject to criminal prosecution by state security courts for statements they made as political figures. Such developments weaken confidence in Turkish democra-

cy," U.S. State Department spokesman James Rubin said Thursday.

Mr. Erdogan had been seen as the leading contender to rebuild and lead Turkey's Islamist political movement after the Islamist Welfare Party was shut down by the Turkish constitutional court for anti-secular activity in January.

The fiercely pro-secular military was instrumental in outlawing Welfare and maintains pressure on the government to crack down on what it perceives as Islamist threats.

Regent meets E

AMMAN (Petra) — HRH Regent, on Saturday called ground for the three main Middle East is being dealt economic, security, human rights, and cultural issues. Prince Hassan said the Regent stressed the need to remove obstacles to economic and cultural development and security in the region that the Middle East is facing for defining its future.

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Dialog road

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AMMAN (Petra) — Royal Highness Prince Hassan, the Regent, emphasized the need for Arab Nations to adhere to the principles of dialogue and to pursue the economic, political, and cultural transformation aspect of the process.

In an address at the opening of a seminar on the Arab World, the Regent said that the Arab world is facing a crisis of confidence and that the only way to overcome it is through dialogue and understanding.

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Ross launches

TEL AVIV (P) — U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright launched a new initiative to resolve the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians.

She said that the U.S. is committed to a peaceful resolution of the conflict and that it will continue to work with both sides to achieve this goal.

She also mentioned the need for economic, political, and cultural transformation in the region.

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Cyprus president pessimistic on talks

NICOSIA (AFP) — Cypriot President Glafcos Clerides said Friday as he left for Greece that he has seen no sign that the Turkish-Cypriots will attend talks to resolve the division of this eastern Mediterranean island.

"There is still no indication of a positive response on behalf of the Turkish side," said Mr. Clerides, a Greek Cypriot.

He is scheduled to attend the

funeral of former Greek President Constantinos Karamanlis and hold talks later in the day with Greek Prime Minister Costas Karamanlis on the Cyprus rift.

Cyprus has been divided since Turkey invaded the northern third in 1974 following a Greek-Cypriot coup in Nicosia aimed at unification with Greece and in 1983, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) declared

independence, but it is recognised only by Ankara.

Mr. Clerides said statements by the Turkish side "leave no room that they will respond positively to anything related to a Cyprus settlement."

Rauf Denktaş, who heads the TRNC, said Thursday the Cyprus problem could be solved within months if the island's two communities were accorded political equality.